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SERMONS.

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SERMONS.

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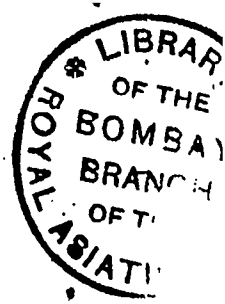
BY THE REVEREND

CHARLES ROBERT MATURIN,

CURATE OF ST. PETER'S, DUBLIN.



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TO

THE VERY REVEREND

JAMES SAURIN,

DEAN OF DERRY, LATE ARCHDEACON OF DUBLIN,

THESE SERMONS

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

To account for the brevity of some of these Sermons, it may be necessary to remark, that they were preached at Evening Service, when the Discourses are usually shorter.

SERMONS.

PREACHED ON THE DEATH OF THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES.

EZEKIEL, xxiv. 16.

Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke.

THESE are the words of God, addressed to the prophet Ezekiel—addressed on an occasion equally awful and affecting. God, resolved to punish the sinful and impenitent Jews for their multiplied transgressions, announced the approaching judgment by one inflicted on the prophet himself, which might stand as a memorial of the truth of the Deity, and a testimony of the resignation of his servant.

About to smite the people of the unbelieving land, the hard-hearted and stiff-necked race who could not see and would not feel the hand of wrath stretched out over them, God declared to the prophet that he would smite *him* first, as an example;—"Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke."

In the following verses the prophet pursues the narrative: "In the morning I spake to the people, and at even my wife died." And he who had preached to them so long and so vainly, warning them of the mischief, hollowness, and worthlessness of their earthly pursuits and earthly feelings, was now to preach to them *by facts;* to announce to them by his own sufferings what theirs would be unless they repented and turned to God.

He was himself torn away by a sudden stroke from the object of his earthly attachment, that he might be empowered

to tell them, in the resistless voice of grief, what they would be doomed by God's just judgment to feel—by his own sufferings he adjured them to repent, that they might be spared sufferings like his.

There is something tremendous in the spectacle of a human being at once made a teacher and an example to his fellow mortals: not warning them in the cold and careless tone that cannot convey conviction (because the speaker has never felt conviction himself), but in that voice which, issuing from the bottom of the heart, penetrates to that of the hearer, and searches its very recesses with a portion of that strength with which the visitation of God hath pierced through his. The lesson taught by the afflicted prophet, we have reason to fear, was taught in vain; we are not told that his countrymen repented, at least they brought forth no "fruits worthy of repentance."

Here, my brethren, let me pause, and direct your attention for a moment to the

characters of those extraordinary men, the Jewish prophets. Their history, told simply as it is by themselves, appears to me enough to convert infidelity. They seem solely to have lived to God, to have passed through mortal existence in a sacred abstraction from its seductions, its infirmities, and its passions. When we read of Elijah defying the rage of the king and the madness of the people, and trusting himself fearlessly to the desert and to famine, for the sake of God and of his truth;—of Isaiah, the uncle of a monarch, disregarding the splendour and power of a court, and bearing awful and single testimony against its depravity and danger;—of Jeremiah, who, whether brought before the presence of his king, and beholding his countenance in complacency, or plunged by his wrath into a dungeon (whose loathsomeness is painted with that *eye-witness* fidelity which makes the reader shudder at its loathsomeness), alike in palace and in dungeon tes-

tifying the truth of God, and calling on the infatuated people (while his voice could yet be heard) to witness the fulfilment of that truth;—of Daniel, who even in the court of the king of Babylon dared to announce to him the destruction of his kingdom, and braved the anger that might have crushed the "prophet of ills" to dust before his unwelcome message was said:—while we read of such men and such things, we are struck with the sublime and unearthly superiority of those beings, not only to their cotemporaries but to all mankind.—I know that history abounds in instances of self-denial as severe, and of voluntary suffering as terrible; but what those who form the heroes of historic narrative underwent, was for themselves, their own pride—passions—interest—self in some way is apparent through all their heroism. But what these men did and suffered, they did and suffered for God;

"They endured as seeing him who is invisible."

Their superiority was owing to no external cause; they were slaves, prisoners, victims, "destitute, afflicted, tormented:" their superiority was owing to that communication with God, and with the powers of the invisible world, which makes the present, with all its seductive and dangerous nearness, all its tangible claims, appear in comparison as the drop of the bucket or the dust of the balance—a thing to be glanced at, weighed, found wanting, and disregarded. Their history leaves on the mind this indelible impression: "If these men were not of God, they could do nothing"—they could not at least have been the men they were. Of all of them, if individual and domestic feeling were to judge, the prophet Ezekiel seems to have been one of the greatest personal sufferers.

Public exigencies, great disasters, rouse

and brace the mind of man; he wakes all the energies of his nature to meet them at his utmost need, and perhaps his pride assists him to bear or to hide the awful impressions of their visitation—but domestic suffering breaks the heart—then even *man* weeps—and no one can chide his tears—and no one can dry them.

By the will of God, Ezekiel was called on to resign his wife, as an example to his depraved and stubborn countrymen of the evils that impended over them from the just judgments of a long-suffering, often-warning, and still-neglected God.

This appears no ordinary sacrifice; slight and unrefined as was the conjugal tie, and indeed most other ties, in the ancient world, the attachment of Ezekiel to his wife appears to have been of no common sort. "Son of man," saith God, "I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke." This strong phrase may indeed be considered by many as an oriental idiom, but the con-

text here leads us to consider it as a phrase distinctly and peculiarly emphatic. In the evening the prophet's wife, the desire of his eyes, died, and in the morning he was commanded to wipe away his tears, and call the people to repentance. He called—and blessed were they who heard his call, if any did hear it: it summoned them from earth to heaven, from fugitive ties, and alienable possessions, and agitating uncertainties, to those hopes that make not ashamed, to that inheritance which is incorruptible.

My brethren, what was the reason that the call of the prophet, that the calls of all those who, under the commission of heaven, or from the impulse of their own feelings and conscience, have addressed mankind, and urged them to relinquish this world for the next, have been found so ineffectual? If we call on you to resign the handful of dust you are grasping with such miserable tenacity, what is the result? You stop your ears, and

grasp it still closer, till the last grain has passed through the dying fingers that can hold them no longer. Wherefore is this?—It is, because the subject, though the most awful on which one human being can address another, is universally the most neglected—shunned in silence—or trifled with in talk—or shut up in a secret recess of the soul, like Paul in Felix's prison, to be examined at a "more convenient season;" a season that never arrives. It is too common to excite interest. A sermon on death is like a funeral passing through the streets; we pause to mark the trappings, but we think not of the corse beneath. The subject is so worn out by perpetual recurrence, or by exhausted sensibility, or artificial insensibility in those who hear, that we may speak on for ever without the hope that what we say gives one thought to the mind—one sting to the conscience—one feeling to the heart—and yet—that subject is Death—almost the

only idea that all men have in common—certainly the only idea that all men seem determined to exclude.

God, his inspired word, the course of nature, the events of human existence—all seem (if I may dare to say so) sworn together to force it on our minds; yet we stop our ears, and harden our hearts, as if —fools and blind that we are—*forgetting* we are to die could make us immortal. Life is full of death; the steps of the living cannot press the earth without disturbing the ashes of the dead—we walk upon our ancestors—the globe itself is one vast churchyard. Cities are built on the ruins of those that have mouldered away, and now serve as the foundation for the pride of modern improvement. Animal life, like vegetable, seems destined to decay, that it may become the bed from which human vegetation is to spring again, fresh, presumptuous, and triumphant, to be cut down, and afford place for a new successor. The ocean

is full of the dead and of their spoils—we are surrounded on every side by those who have passed away, by their remains, or by their recollections. Oh! how populous is futurity, how alive is the grave!—

"This is the desert, this the solitude."

Millions, countless millions more than are now alive, are gone before us, and the generations that are yet to be born will be born to people the tomb. Reflection teaches these awful lessons to a few, and well for those who are taught by her—if we refuse *her*, we shall have a sterner teacher, even experience, whose trembling pupils we must all become, whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear.

But it is not the lesson we so much need to know—we know it, though we are callous to it—it is its application we require—we want something to bring it to our hearts by a terrible, a penetrating,

an afflicting dispensation; something that will force open the eyes which we resolutely close, that will make the ear tingle which we stop, that will sink into the heart which we harden in vain against its power. Such has not been wanted.

We have, within these last few awful days, been taught what death is in all its terrors, in all its anguish, in all its bitterness of present evil, in all its overwhelming and incalculable consequences of future danger and calamity. The destroying angel bore a two-edged weapon, as subtle as it was potent—fine enough to divide the most exquisite ligaments—strong enough to sunder the mightiest ties—one edge cut off domestic happiness—the other smote to the dust the hopes of a mighty nation.

Myriads die every day—myriads are dying every moment—and of multitudes of them, it must be allowed, that those who wish them best, who, perhaps, love

them most, have reason to wish them dead many years before they die—perhaps the very best wish they can give them. The old—the very aged—die after they have survived their hopes—their views—their children—their grandchildren—their senses—and themselves—after there is nothing left in the world to which they were born, and in which they have lived, except the hopes of a grave—which life, however full of disappointments and privations, always insures to the sufferer.

The afflicted die, and their death is an end of suffering—the diseased perish, and their dissolution is an end of pain.—We may well behold with patience that release which we have often seen the sufferer himself pray for in agony. All this constant lesson of daily mortality we receive without instruction—the event is ordinary—often welcome—we see them pass away, and forget we are to follow them. Some tears, but they are rather

the tears of recollection than of conviction, are dropped on the graves of the dead instead of sinking into our own hearts—from whatever source they are drawn, we dry them soon—we turn away our eyes from the hand-writing on the wall—and rush back to the banquet—readily persuaded that the summons was intended for our companions, not for us.

But the human heart is not always suffered to slumber in security; its sleep is sometimes broken by a voice that will be heard; a hand commissioned by Heaven rends open our curtains, and a terrible light flashes on the eyes of the dreamer through the opening. At times the dispensations of the Almighty exceed in strength and terror all that could be imaged out in the dreams of casuistry, or the visions of delirium. If imagination were tasked to devise an event that united the widest extremes of domestic misery and national calamity, that com-

bined all the sufferings of mortality with the more tremendous impressions of eternity, imagination itself would faint under the burthen of conceiving a portion of that evil which bows us down before God in anguish—in terror—and I trust in repentance, as at this day.

The image of a young female about to be bound to existence by a new and delightful tie, about to become a mother, requires scarce an additional feature to interest every heart for its object;—add to this that she is beautiful, beloved, intellectual, exalted, and virtuous;—add, that it is not only the heart of a husband and father that trembles for her safety—that the hearts of millions are throbbing—that the hopes of a mighty nation depend on her—and surely our knees would be instantly, eagerly bent in supplication for the preservation of her inestimable life. Such prayers, doubtless, have been put up by many, without the parade of affected feeling

or exaggerated loyalty—they have been answered—but not as the supplicants had hoped—she is no more!

She has been smitten in the abundant and accumulated enjoyment of those blessings, any of which, singly, is enough to enrich life, any of which would have conferred happiness on us: youth, health, eminence, felicity, *domestic felicity*—the best, the only that deserves the name, the sole flower that has been borne unwithered from paradise. "Whatsoever things are pure—whatsoever things are lovely—whatsoever things are of good report—if there was any virtue, and if there was any praise," they all waited on her—they all have perished with her. No event of greater horror and anguish ever desolated the "short and simple" annals of domestic life: no event, perhaps, of similar importance, has left its awful track on the page of history. But from history, at this moment, we turn with disgust; such events

make general truths and remote examples loathsome to the mind of man: at such a moment as this we seek, like Joseph, a place where we may weep, and go to our chambers and weep there.

Perhaps, my brethren, there is no place from which the awful lessons of this event can sink into our hearts with more force and weight than that from which I address you. Our business here, indeed, is to tell you not of time, but of eternity—yet as eternity, in this wretched perishable existence, must often borrow its topics from time, I demand had we ever such a topic to address you on, so full of grief—so full of instruction?—Never. Kingdoms have passed away, and they have left no impression behind them on the earth; their rulers are gone, and have left little but the frightful traces of their crimes and their passions. Over the graves of a Nero, a Pope Sixtus, or a Louis the Eleventh, we cannot tread without feeling our feet recoil, as

our hearts do when we outrage them by reading their lives.

The mighty of the earth are gone; the conquerors are departed; "the proud are robbed and have slept:" Who mourned for them? Tears were shed for them indeed, but they were shed by the widows and orphans whom their swords had made. But she is mourned by the tears of those from whose eyes she never drew a tear but the bitter one that drops on her grave. All panegyric is idle and profane—Her best eulogy is in that burst of sorrow which answers me this moment,—that awful murmur of involuntary grief which at this moment is echoing through three nations—She is with God, she looks down on our grief. —The titles to which her birth and high destiny called her are lost; they shall be heard no more, save once from the faltering lips of the herald who pronounces them over her coffin—Princess! Future sovereign of the first country on

earth! Daughter of kings! Descendant from a race that extends beyond tradition!—Oh what a mockery to her dust! But there are titles that remain, and that shall be blazoned not by mortal, but immortal heralds—The best of daughters!—the most affectionate and beloved of wives!—Alas, alas, it is thy will, oh God! that we cannot add to them that of mother.

Brethren, if we ask why this awful blow has been struck, why nations have been disappointed of their hope, and anguish sent into the heart of every individual dweller in them, our answer must be,—let us repose ourselves on God—let us say "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good;"—let us seek consolation where (amid all the distinctions of exalted station) she was sometimes compelled to seek it—where she doubtless found it—where she is enjoying it now. It is difficult and delicate to speak of those whose superior station veils them

from common view—it is tremendous to speak of those whom the hand of God hath snatched from mortal sight for ever—it is with an humble and trembling touch we should dare to approach the veil of futurity—yet some gleams of light break though it to cheer and to direct us. Let us remember that this illustrious person, amid anguish unspeakable, the anguish of the mother of a first-born child, of the parent of a future sovereign, could utter on the disastrous announcement of the loss of all her hopes, "God's will be done!" My brethren, we never can undergo trials like hers—but we can attain, we can at least pray for, resignation like hers. It is impossible that the first instructions we take from calamity should be taken or given in a collected, coherent manner—the event, the terrible event is rushing on our souls every moment, and defeating by the force of its recollection the utility of those lessons its recollection should teach. It is awful to see Death in all

his might, and blasting youth, and withering life, and severing the ties of nature and of the heart, and trampling on all human power, and defying all human skill, and crushing all at a blow into the cold and narrow tomb, and writing on it with his dart—Mortals, such is the will of my Master and of yours!—Oh, one such fact preaches more than many sermons; it preaches to the soul of man within him! May it preach powerfully to yours.

That we may reap the full benefit of the lesson which she died to give, let our thoughts follow her corse to the last receptacle of human greatness and of human suffering. Let us behold the coffins followed by the afflicted relatives —by Him who is a widower indeed—by hearts in mourning, by the tears of three nations. There lie the blasted flower, and the blighted bud!—There is one mourner who is not there;—the hand of heaven hath smote him—the sources of tears and of sight are dried up long ago! He does not know his loss;—surely the

blow was dealt in mercy. Let *us* mourn for him! He cannot weep!—Let us listen to the last solemn words—Ashes to ashes, dust to dust! Let us behold the vault closed on the mortal remains for ever and ever!

Then let us retire to commune with our own heart and in our chamber; and if we *have* hearts, the power of God will be there to touch, to elevate, and to purify them. My brethren, remember the words of our text, "Son of man, behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes, &c.: but thou shalt neither mourn nor weep."

Tears it is indeed impossible to withhold, but let this tremendous dispensation not make us weep merely; let it also make us *think*—think, and be the better for reflection,—weep, and be the happier for our tears. We cannot benefit by that life which promised happiness to millions—we may, oh, we must benefit by her death—she must not have died in vain! Let us ask ourselves what should

we most eagerly wish to resemble her in? Her exalted rank none can aspire to; her intellectual power few, very few; in her devotion to God, in the uprightness of heart, and excellence of her life, all—the humblest of us, may. Blessed be God! the most salutary part of her example is also the easiest. When we hear of this exalted being and her illustrious partner engaged, like the humblest pair in their own (future) dominions, in the enjoyment of domestic life, in the duties of domestic piety, "in every good word and work," we feel a glow of heart at seeing religion thus dignified by high station, and at the thought that not even the humblest can withhold or excuse us from "going and doing likewise."

Such as *she* was, all her future subjects would be blessed had they been. She is gone—but while she is ascending, may we catch the mantle, and feel the inspiration! She is gone to him who can a thousand-fold recompense the

loss of life and empire, even with that crown which has no thorns, with those pleasures which know neither diminution nor end! She is gone to him before whom the kingdoms of the earth are as the dust of the balance—and its enjoyments as the bubble on the stream—for with him is an inheritance incorruptible—at his right hand are pleasures for evermore!

Beloved, and shall not we seek to be there? At this moment, under the lessoning of this tremendous dispensation, do we not feel at the very bottom of our chastised, converted hearts the vanity, the hollowness, the nothingness of life?

Eternity! eternity! seems to be in the very echo of that blow which has smitten us to the dust. Oh then, my brethren, to God and to eternity let us turn! All things, and grief above all, conspire to lead us to him. Approach him then through him who is the way, the truth, and the life—seek a living interest in

the Lord Jesus—walk by the faith of the Son of God, and in the humble, world-resigning spirit of his gospel! She whom we deplore, whom perhaps our latest posterity shall deplore, resigned without a murmur the title of sovereign for saint in heaven;—we have not her sacrifices to make; we cannot, like Abraham, offer up our first-born!

Yet, let us cast our mite into the treasury of resignation—let us offer up our souls and bodies a lively sacrifice to God:—it is our reasonable service.—Let us resign to him our hearts and our lives, and he will not reject them—he will in no wise cast us out. So shall this afflictive dispensation be sanctified to us—so shall it be "good for us that we have been in trouble,"—so shall we prove the truth of the Apostle's declaration that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God."

Great God, in whose eyes subjects and sovereigns are alike thy creatures—

thou hast smitten the gourd under which we hoped that our posterity should have been sheltered, but thou canst console the pilgrim—thou hast quenched the light of Israel, but thy glory can yet be our rearward—thou hast held the cup to our lips—it may not pass away—Father, thy will be done.

Now to God, &c.

PREACHED ON THE SUNDAY AFTER THE DEATH OF THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE.

1 THES. iv. 13.

Sorrow not as them that have no hope.

THE last time, my brethren, I addressed you from this place, it was to echo that voice of grief which was poured from every heart in three mighty nations. Their hearts were as the heart of one man—every head was bowed, and every hand was wrung, and every eye was wet for one calamity—and those hands will be cold, and those eyes closed, before that calamity shall be forgotten. There is a time for grief—a time when suffering admits of no alleviation, when we must weep with those that weep, because they can do nothing but weep—they spurn at the cold talk of reason, they neglect even the sublime consolations of religion. This period of unmitigated and unmitigable grief must be allowed

to man when he suffers—it is best to yield to the expression of suffering—the impulse of nature cannot be repelled: then comes another time—more tranquil, if not happy—the time when the human mind looks round for consolation, feels its deep want of it, and traverses earth and earthly things in search of it—in vain! Earth, the world, can give no consolation—life can give none—wherever we look for comfort we see around us nothing but suffering. We look round for consolation, and find that we ourselves are forced to be the consolers—we quit our own scenes of suffering, anxious for relief or for variety, and we find the same scene renewed—suffering is every where—no variety—the same awful monotony of distress every where recurring, sometimes disguised in robes of state, sometimes staring in naked deformity through the rags of beggars—no matter, the same suffering every where. Take up the history of life where you will;

ask whose image and superscription is this? the answer is, suffering—suffering! Grief and futurity are the only two characters that are legible on the surface. Look to human reason! Well, what does reason teach—what *can* reason teach? Why, that unavoidable evils are not to be avoided, that inconsolable sufferings are not to be mitigated, and other branches of knowledge equally instructive and satisfactory. Miserable comforters are ye all! may the sufferer exclaim, turning from them both—puny and pitiful consolation can ye afford us when sunk in suffering. And is there no other resource? Yes; blessed be God! there is religion: there is that which points to a future state, and tells us not to sorrow as those that have no hope: there is that which can give more than life gives to the happiest, or reason to the wisest—a hope—hope not pointing with eternal deceitfulness to this perishable existence, promising every

moment, and in less than a moment breaking its promise, deluding us with its harlot's smile to ruin us with a harlot's seduction—no; the hope that religion offers is the only hope that maketh not ashamed—a hope that points not to time, but to futurity. For God's sake, my brethren, let us ask ourselves if this be not the only hope that is left us—it is not merely the best, but the only. What is life? a dream to the weak, a jest to the wise, a thing that we struggle with, submit to, groan under, laugh at—a mixture of misery and madness! Life—what is life? Consider it seriously—seriously, if we can; even this place, where nothing but the names of God and eternity are heard, and which is surrounded by the memorials of the departed—of those who are dead—who are what we must be, whose dead voices are almost calling on us to join them—even this place does not always make us serious; let it for once. Let us ask

ourselves what is human life? The question, my brethren, is of some importance —we must view man under three characters—as a savage—as a being whose *intellectual* faculties are cultivated—and lastly as acquainted with the blessedness of religion. What happiness do the former class know? the happiness of brutality—horrible felicity! if it be felicity—the happiness that may be shared with brutes: though some writers even of this age have struggled hard to prove that this is the best state of man. I would not notice them from this place but to notice the monstrous falsehood, which lies against God, and nature, and truth. The life of a brute was never intended to be the life of man. Yet there are writers, and some of those whom I address are well acquainted with those writers, who would teach us that man in his natural state is most perfect, and that the heir of immortality is formed not to be above the beasts

that perish. Waving all this, false as it is absurd and wicked, what favourable view can we take of life from grounds merely human? Shall we look at cultivated man? shall we hope that in proportion as man becomes more civilized, or in common language *better educated*, he becomes a being more happy? The savage is a miserable, brutal wretch; would to heaven that those who have praised such a state of existence were compelled to partake of it for a short, a very short time! their rage for novelty would soon be exhausted. The intellectual man no doubt has many enjoyments, but he has no internal comforts, no support of the soul—no anchor fixed in the ocean of futurity—if he suffers, he suffers as them that have no hope. It would be absurd to tell from this place the often-told stories of the deaths of such men;—men who in the pride of their intellectual power set themselves up against the hopes and terrors of the

Lord. It would be useless to talk of them now,—"they died and made no sign; Oh God, forgive them!" Well, then, brethren, what lot are we to choose? We are intellectual beings,—we must be immortal, whether we will or no. If we are to decide on the true dignity of our species, if we wish either to live with the dignity of accountable beings or die with the peace of immortal ones, we will place all our trust, our confidence, our strength, our hope, in God and religion alone. It is this alone can give us exaltation—it is this alone can give us peace.

Select any individual in your imagination—surround him with every thing that men are accustomed to call fortunate, eminent, or enviable;—health, fortune, friends, fame, cultivated intellect;—add richer colouring to the picture, add till imagination and desire are exhausted, and when you have finished the portrait, it is the portrait of a finished

wretch; if it be that of a being who knows not God,—who is conscious of an immortal spirit within him, but knows neither its destination nor its dignity,—who feels within him those cravings of unsatisfied desire, that render all his present enjoyments hollow, worthless, and unsatisfactory,—that poison them by an indefinite longing after immortality of which his terror increases with his certainty. But shew me a being crushed to the earth under all the accumulated evils of nature and fortune, one whom the rising sun wakens to light up to suffer, and on whom it sets without bringing him the hope of rest, one whom the world has never regarded but with the averted eye of scorn or of hatred; and that being is blessed,—blessed above the lot of mankind,—if God is the stay of his heart, and the consoler of his sorrows,—if religion has shed its wine and oil into his wounds,—if, as he toils through the wilderness of sin

and suffering, he beholds the promised land bright before him, and knows that "his light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Oh, brethren! what must be the power and blessedness of the religion of Christ, that can make us—frail and feeble beings as we are, bound down with the chains of infirmity—forget them, or feel them not, when we are once brought under its gracious and superior influences! What must be its power, that when it is thus put into one scale can counterpoise all the evils of humanity in the other, and make them in comparison as the dust of the balance!

Yes, such is its power; and our own hearts are witnesses of it even when they wander most from God. At this moment is there one of us present, however we may have walked unworthily of the gospel of Christ, however we may have

departed from the Lord, disobeyed his will and disregarded his word,—is there one of us who would at this moment accept all that man could bestow or earth afford to resign the hope of salvation? No, there is not one—not such a fool on earth, were the enemy of souls to traverse it with the offer. Oh! no; however our hearts may be corrupted by the cares, the passions, and the evils of life, there is not one that does not echo to the truth of the awful question of Christ, "What shall a man be profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" We may live fools and madmen, but we cannot die so; even the most vicious in the midst of their career would be rejoiced to exclaim, "Let me die the *death* of the righteous!" Such is the power of that religion from which is derived every topic of consolation here and of hope hereafter; and

its character is as mild as its influence is blessed. Does it war with the pardonable infirmities of our nature? does it turn our hearts to stone to prevent their throbbing? does it substitute insensibility for pain, and like the heartless virtue of the ancients, in the attempt to make us more than man make us worse than brutes? No; it is the religion of him who made the human heart, who knows its weaknesses, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Christ does not require of his disciples not to sorrow, for he knew that man was born to sorrow: he allows them to sorrow; but not as others who have no hope. Under the pressure of sudden and severe infliction, when our hopes and our hearts are dead within us, when we have lost the beloved of our hearts, the delight of our eyes, when those are dead whom we would die to follow, and are reconciled to life only by the resolution that we will live to

weep that life away,—at such a moment (and all of us have had such moments) to bid the sufferer not mourn would be an insult to humanity; yet such is the wretched consolation that the world can offer us: vain exhortations to support our spirits when there is nothing to support them—vain advice to forget our grief, when the very effort awakens remembrance even to agony.

Thus says the world; but what says the Bible, or rather what says the Son of God? Sorrow; but not as them that have no hope. Simple and sublime language, alike conversant with the truths of life, and the secrets of eternity! Awful and beautiful,—revealing our destiny here, and brightening the prospect with a light borrowed from heaven! Yes, my brethren, let us submit our souls to this divine monition. Every thing conspires to call us from the world, to draw us to God, to bid us resign the husks of tem-

poral existence, and banquet on the bread of immortality in our Father's house. Think—oh! think solemnly of that place to which we are approaching —a place of blessedness or wretchedness unimaginable. I will turn away from the latter view; and God grant that our minds may be fixed here, and our souls united hereafter, in the former. The ancients consoled themselves with the thoughts of meeting poets and philosophers in their Elysium; but the Christian's heaven has a brighter company,—prophets and patriarchs, saints and martyrs, and *she* whose crown and palm were so lately given: and those whom we loved, and those whom we lost, shall we not hope they are there? "The spirits of just men made perfect" are there, all holy, happy, and harmonious; the Son of God is there, "who loved us, and gave himself for us;" and God himself, whose name is love, whose presence is eternal blessedness! And shall not we seek to be there? Oh

yes: "let us seek, and we shall find; let us knock, and it shall be opened." Of the occupations of the blessed spirits we know nothing, yet we may form a faint and humble conjecture, a shadowing-out of that glory which is veiled from us on this side the grave: when we have done a good action, when we have dried the tear of the widow and the orphan, visited the fatherless and widow in their affliction, or dealt our bread to the hungry, have we not felt a glow of heart, an enjoyment so distinct from earthly enjoyments that we almost blushed to return to the poor and pitiful resources of common life? There is then a pleasure that earth cannot give. Of such a nature will be our portion: Oh, that it may! But no human hand must draw the veil; there is a hand approaching that soon will unclose it to all. Oh! then, beloved, let us "cleave with firm purpose of heart to the Lord,"—"let our life be hid with Christ in God;"—and then if even our earthly lot

be cast among those who sit in darkness, if our feet tread only the house of mourning, and we eat our bread in the bitterness of our heart, still we shall not sorrow as those that have no hope: we shall be enabled to feel and enjoy the consolation which Christ gave to his people when he said, "Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy; and your joy no man taketh from you."

Now to God, &c.

PREACHED ON THE DEATH OF LORD NELSON.

ST. JOHN's GOSPEL, ix. 33.

If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

In Jesus Christ, the high-priest of our profession, the author and finisher of our faith, we have a merciful high-priest, and one who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Every feature of his dispensation confirms this character: while it reveals "wrath against ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," it makes indulgent provision for those infirmities which are the consequences not of vice, but of weakness, for those changes of mind

and circumstance which the wisest of us cannot resist, and the best cannot blame. Thus we are exhorted, by its spirit, to exercise a charitable consideration for local peculiarities in the states of those to whom we are rendering its offices. We are "to rejoice with them that rejoice, to weep with them that weep." "If any among us is sad, let him pray; if any be merry, let him sing psalms."

Thus by adapting itself to the variations of our nature, when their direction is not to evil, it acquires over them an influence the most salutary, it makes our lightest frames tributary to our best, it converts an impulse into a virtue, and extracts from time and place, and the course of things, a power to make themselves remembered and felt, as sometimes supplying the means of grace, and sometimes awakening the hope of glory.

If such be the effect produced by the common events of life under this dispensation, what ought we to ascribe to *that* which we are assembled to commemorate? an event of which the greatness, in extent and in consequences, cannot be comprised in the widest sweep of calculation,—an event not to be viewed in the cold, remote light of a mere political advantage—a superiority in the wrestle against flesh and blood—against principalities and powers; but "against the rulers of the darkness of this world;—against spiritual wickedness in high places,"—against those who extend their influence beyond the limits of human malignity, and, after "having killed the body," have "more that they can do," and seek to destroy the soul,—who wrest from their victims all that is valuable in this life, and present them with a blank for remuneration in another,—who menace us with the

loss not only of those benefits which we enjoy as men and citizens, but of those blessings by which, as Christians, "we live, and move," and have our spiritual and better being.

This event our hierarchy have set apart this day to commemorate. In conformity to their summons, we are assembled this day, to present a spectacle of which the solemnity can only be equalled by christian annals—the spectacle of a whole nation prostrate, in a single and simultaneous act of adoration, before a God whose recent and providential interference they desire to acknowledge.

And on such a day as this, shall I dare to represent these events as local and transitory—shall I suffer its name and consequences to expire with the shouts that rung in your ears, or the fires that blazed in your streets?

Shall I add another gust of inflamma-

tion to your national and individual pride, and content myself with laying on it the cheap tax of listening for half an hour to a formal and incredulous dissuasion from it? Shall I, subverting the purpose of our meeting, substitute the means for the object, and dwell on the act till we have forgot the agent, and, like Aaron, encourage the host to bend with infatuated worship before the idol of their own inventions, while they turn from the mount where God, lost in his own brightness, remains unworshipped —unacknowledged?—God forbid!

When Elisha sojourned in Dothan, and the Syrians sent forth an army to take him, the young man arose early in the morning, and saw them, and said; Alas! master, what shall we do? And Elisha prayed, Lord, open thou his eyes, that he may see; and the Lord opened his eyes, and behold the mountain was full of horses, and of chariots of fire,

round about Elisha. Such should be my office and language.

In the world you will hear such events discussed and agitated, here you should hear them unfolded and applied. Go into the world to hear their political advantages defined and adjusted, but come here to transcribe lessons of providential mercy into a grateful and awakened heart. Go abroad to be elated by the pride of national triumph and rejoicing, the high deed and circumstance of victory—but come here to read in these splendid achievements the evidences of that sin, which renders the permission of evil necessary for its punishment, —to read with shuddering gratitude how many have perished that we might be safe. Go into the world, to see the varied forms and movements of life, passing in dark disordered array, apparently without principle and without direction, perplexing us with the fear of change that

cannot be calculated, and of calamities that cannot be averted; but let us assemble here to be taught, that this defect lies not in the *objects* but in the *vision*, that *they* are in themselves the features of a system equable, regular, and harmonious, the work of *Him*, whose "judgments are indeed unsearchable, and whose ways are past finding out," but who hath declared, that "all things shall work together for our good," that "the fierceness of man shall turn to his praise," and that "the wind and the storm are but fulfilling his word." And if there ever was a period in which the arm of the Lord has been revealed; in which the interposition has been less perplexing, and the blindness of man more without excuse, it is the present. The whole aspect and frame of affairs suggests but one conclusion, and that conclusion has the strongest tendency to confirm the sentiment of my text, viz.

the judicial agency of the divinity in the events of this life.

The diffusion of moral and physical evil, under which we have languished for fifteen years, has been extensive and pernicious, exactly in proportion to the aptitude (from moral depravity) to receive it, in those countries through which it has passed.

Wherever it has spread and settled, there has been a preparation made for it, by some defection in the truth of religion, or in purity of practice, and that defection has been at once marked and visited by the judicial and systematic severity of the infliction.

Every where national guilt has been the forerunner of national misery: a view of Europe, which now presents little more than a mass of the victories of one nation, confirms this truth but too fully. If we look to the South*,

* Italy.

we behold a people among whom was raised and supported the colossal fabric of Antichrist, a system which placed in earthly domination the kingdom of Him whose kingdom was not of this world—which ruled the sovereigns of the earth with a rod of iron, and made the people drunk with the cup of her abominations—who, like her prototype in the Revelations, traded in gold, and silver, and precious stones, and the souls of men—a people whose domestic manners exhibited the awful contrast between having a form of godliness, and denying the power thereof—who displayed a perpetual vicissitude of artificial religion and substantial vice—where the libertine rushed reeking from the brothel to the confessional, and the cloister gave alternate shelter to the assassin and the devotee.

We see this people, thus depraved, eminently suffering under the just judgments of God. Their country plun-

dered of those monuments which for ages had made it the delight of taste, and luxury, and learning; their princes pent up, and shaking in a corner of their narrowed dominions, unable either to remain or to retreat with dignity; and their pontiff dragged from his chair, and escorted by a guard of mocking unbelievers, to a prostitution of his derided office, and returning to gasp out his thanksgivings that he had escaped with life.

If we turn to the North, we see a nation, perhaps less depraved, but more culpable in their depravity, because they were a people of more solid powers, possessing more literary and moral freedom, and greater opportunities of instruction —a people who admitted and propagated the doctrines of the revolution with an industry which has avenged itself in the deterioration of their morals, and the calamities of their country—a people who endeavoured to infect our morals

through the medium of our literature, and found in our translators the ready factors of communicated vice—who sent among us not famine, nor pestilence, nor the sword, but their writings—writings which blend school-boy talents with maturity in wickedness, which represent the passions, not by images, but by spectres, in a state of visionary terror and distorted enlargement—where the ear grows wearisomely familiar with the unnatural violence of exaggerated sentiment and blasphemous exclamation—and every species of outrageous and impure stimulation that can be applied to the morbid impotence of degraded appetite.

Nor were their writings confined to subjects merely fantastic, their design was for the most part political and religious; every form of order, whether social or religious—all that binds man to man, and man to God—they purposed to obliterate and destroy, and reduce us to

a savage wickedness of life, without comfort and without civilization, "having no hope, and without God in the world."

Such was the tendency of German literature—such the language of German writers—such, probably, the tone of German morality. And what have been the sufferings of the German nation? From the commencement of war their country has been the seat, and their countrymen the victims of its calamities. In my early youth I remember a book filled with an account of the individual sufferings of that people under the horrors of a French visitation. And the events of this winter might fill up another ample niche in the annals of despair. Other countries, and their states, time does not permit me to review, though I am bold to assert the review (particularly of Holland, of Spain, and of Switzerland) would justify the principle, that the most distinguished victims of French horrors have been either the industrious

propagators of their opinions, or the zealous imitators of their vices.

But I hasten to speak of the source whence these overflowings of ungodliness have issued. I hasten to speak of a country, whose boast it was to set up the standard of depravity to the rest of Europe, and to congratulate us, with a wicked levity, on the communication of their vices.

A country where the priest, "whose "lips should have kept knowledge, and in "whose heart should have been the know-"ledge of truth"—the priest, by his frequency in the haunts of dissipation—by his amphibious and lay-imitating dress—by the liberal looseness of his language and principles, sought to confound the irksome distinctions of a profession which supplied him with the means of abusing and degrading it with impunity; and when summoned to its rites, performed them with that proud and awkward constraint, which bespeaks the mind at

variance with the actions; and of whom many, when the revolution made hypocrisy no longer necessary to guilt, dashing off the trappings of their mock-religion, ran with gloating eyes to offer adorations to a naked harlot on the very spot* which had echoed with the prayers and praises of their repudiated God—a country, where the nobles presented a strange mixture of daring vice and sickly effeminacy, where in contempt of the ties of social morality, and the purer influence of gospel-lore, was set up a phantom† from the dark and bloody times of feudal disorder, under whose influence the young hand was taught to be familiar with blood, and the mind to learn that dreadless hardihood which arises not from an intimacy, but from ignorance of the things of futurity, not from the hopefulness of faith but the stupefaction of incredulity—a country

* The church of Nôtre Dame.

† Duelling.

where the philosophers, inverting the scriptural process, taught that the contempt of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom, and to be immersed in all evil, that was understanding—who, legislating for the human race, gave them a baseless morality and a Godless religion—who, adapting themselves to every class of intellectual weakness they had to impose on, sometimes made their opinions whine in the seductive sentimentality of a novel, sometimes made them dictate systems of education, in which the human pupil is reared like the animal or vegetable, and taught to consider that, like them, his growth shall be temporary, his powers transient, and his decadency final; and sometimes tricking them out in flimsy and glittering nakedness, with scarce science or sentiment enough to hide their foulness, taught them to speak the garbled and superficial prattlement of philosophic ignorance.

But in every form, whether senti-

mental, or scientific, or moral, or legislative, they are recognized as breathing but one sentiment—enmity to the glory of God on high, and to peace and good will amongst men. Such was the country from whence these evils have issued, and on which, in pursuance of a judicial providence, they have been visited with exemplary severity. Even to this hour of boasted stability and harmony, that country presents the spectacle of a government without foundation, of laws without a sanction, of power without appeal; where, instead of the sovereign reigning by the grace of God, God reigns by the grace of the sovereign, whom we have beheld with amazed eyes, summoning successively the ministers of different and opposite religions to attest his unbelieving belief, and consecrate his unhallowed domination. Amid this desolating flood, which has swept away almost every vestige of European liberty, wherefore does Great Britain

stand, the sole memorial-rock of security and strength? The space she occupies is as a speck to those whom it has swept away; her population, her wealth, her resources inferior to theirs, her finances have often been perplexed, her expeditions often unsuccessful; she has been assailed by insidious enemies, by internal combinations; she "has been persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, "but not destroyed." Wherefore? Let not stubborn incredulity gainsay the cause —there are fifty righteous among us, and the city has been spared. We have gone forth with means comparatively feeble as the shepherd's sling, and the smooth stones of the bag, but the cause has consecrated our incapacity, and in that name in which David conquered, we have smitten the giant to the earth—even in the name of the living God.

There are many who will hear this proposition with reluctance—many who will conceive it extravagant and unau-

thorized—many who love to consider the Deity as a remote and passive agent, placed at an immeasurable distance from human affairs and their inspection, and superseding his own power by the mechanical and uninterrupted agency of natural causes. Such will be ready to assign any cause for the events we have marked, but the interposition of the divine will: they will ascribe our national superiority to our national spirit and virtues, to a constitution of mind that gives to Britons a daring steadiness, a patient and sober fearlessness, a submissive and self-denied firmness, an intense and eager collectedness of mind in the hour of danger above any other nation under heaven. Now, admitting this observation (which lies on the surface of the national character), it furnishes us with an additional confirmation of the observation it was intended to refute. That these qualifications are the foundation of the national supe-

riority is true; and it is also true that these qualifications are the peculiar growth of minds deeply impressed with the sentiments and truths of religion. Hence, let the proposition be canvassed how it will, let the Deity be represented acting by his immediate power, or disposing the minds and movements of his creatures to produce a similar effect, the sentiment of our text remains an unalterable truth—a sentiment that, by recognizing the agency of Divinity in the works of his creatures, instructs, that if the power of man were not of God, he could do nothing. It is in this subdued and convinced spirit we must view every event by which the world suffers itself to be agitated in the ignorance of its fear. We who believe in a God, who believe in *Him* whom the Scripture reveals to us in that vast sweep of providential agency in which the Lord of Hosts surveys the fall of a sparrow —we, my friends, have a security of

strength to mock at human vicissitude, a faith that overcometh the world; we know there is a power controlling all human events, and shaping the stubborn and thwarting lines of human agency to some purpose which shall redound to his own glory.

Our progress in this world should be like the march of the Israelites in the wilderness, and whether God appears in the illumination of his obvious interposition, or surrounded in the cloudy pillar of his darker purposes, still we should be confident that God is with us of a truth. On this spirit, therefore, which sees good in all things, and good of an higher power and character than mere natural things can bestow, I congratulate you, my brethren. My Christian brethren, it is our privilege, and the more freely we exercise it, the more richly shall we feel its consolations; it secures us from all things by which the world loves to agitate its va-

pid energies, and make to itself matter of pain and of importance; it secures us from the importunity of selfish hope, the disappointment of querulous sagacity, and the dejection of unbelieving despondency; it accompanies us through life, divesting calamity of danger, and prosperity of presumption, giving to the individual strength to resist the shock that has shaken nations, and to believe and hope where nature trembles and despairs: nor shall its influence be limited to these elements—it shall not desert us in the hour of death, nor in the day of judgment.

And shall such a spirit be accused of the extremes against which its influence can alone secure us? Shall its confidence be considered as enthusiasm, or its tranquillity as apathy? No; let apathy be the reproach of those who love to measure the tide of events by the shallow line of personal advantage. While the worldling, as on this day,

exults with an unseemly joy—while, overlooking the causes and consequences of this great event, he hugs himself in selfish security, forgetting the dreadful price of the blood and tears of thousands—while he peruses with heartless pride the journal of victory and death, not thinking how many read with straining eyes the intelligence of their utter domestic ruin, which the general triumph embitters, not consoles—how many pass from name to name with sick and dreadful hope, and when, at length, they meet with that name, dropped with cursory and customary mention of fruitless praise, feel all the local triumph lost in the anguish of the widow and the orphan; —while all this is unthought-of by the worldling, we, my brethren, will feel a joy greater than selfish joy, in the thought, that not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name is the praise; we will feel a complacency in giving thanks for the operations of his hands, superior

to what the world feels in contemplating the fancied work of its own—a confidence unspeakably firm and joyful in the conviction, that if the powers that fight for us were not of God, they could do nothing. But this is not the only test of the superiority of this spirit; it is the storm that proves the difference between the houses which have their foundations in the rock, and in the sand. There is an hour, when the expectation of human confidence is defeated by some sudden blast of surprise, or some slow mining of decay—when, amazed and gasping, we stare around us in breathlessness of pain, without knowing the direction from which it was expected, or the probability of ruin on its repetition—when we feel all that had formed the habitual trust and strength of our souls disappear at once, without the possibility of return, or of substitute. At such an hour is seen the superiority of that spirit which we have de-

scribed as that in which the Christian views the events of public life—resigned, not dejected—confident, not enthusiastic—possessing tranquillity without torpor, and interest without the anguish of solicitude—knowing that all power to injure is permitted, and therefore limited—that all evil is controlled, and therefore transient—and that if those who punish us were not of God, they could do nothing. But it is not only by the greater events and periods of human life that this spirit is exercised and proved—it pursues—it penetrates—it pervades where all other feelings fail and retire. Glorious in its relations and consequences as the event is which we are assembled to commemorate, who would bear to behold it in its nakedness of horror? What exulting partaker of this day's triumph could bear to be dragged to the deck, or the field of fight?—worse than if the surface of the earth were laid open, and the charnel-

house of nature uncovered; for death not only appears, but appears in such horrible mode and circumstance, that his simple visiting, fearful as that is to nature, is here considered as a blessing! Myriads of our fellow creatures—beings with every pulse beating like ours to life and enjoyment—parched and stiffening in the winter wind, whose keenness blows spears and arrows into their raw and open wounds; others so gashed and mangled, that of humanity not even the form remains, but through the memberless stump a quivering movement of faint agony, an horrid feeling of animation, making life more terrible than death! Many who have been known (when the survivors wandered among the dead, to discover those they knew), glad of a warm human touch, to grasp the hand that felt them with a force which nothing but force could shake off! Many who have compounded for days with the faint remains, in the sick hope of having

their cureless wounds bound up—their moment of life protracted by the cold comfort of an hospital-bed; who, supported by this hope, which kept in life without the joy of life, have listened for hours to the impatient croak of the raven and the vulture, that fluttered nearer and nearer, or to the gurgling of water that enhanced their feverish torture, but to which they were unable to drag their remains; and who, at length, have been despatched by the knife of some human beast of prey, who follows in the rear of the fight, to tread out the last sparks of life, and strip the carcase, while its startings and heavings made their practised hands shiver to touch it. Such a scene as this, with ten million circumstances such as none but a witness can describe or feel, must accompany every such event as that we are assembled to commemorate. And such a scene what mortal can bear to behold? The

Christian. In this tremendous spectacle he only beholds the murderous ravagings of sin, the consequences of that corruption which he feels within his own breast, and of which this is but a detailed representation. That spectacle raises his consideration to those more awful and unspeakable sufferings which were owing to the same cause—to Christ, who came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and who bore ours in his own body on the tree, —who died to procure and prepare for us a "better country, that is to say, an heavenly," "where war and tumult are no more," "where sorrow and sighing shall flee away,"—a "kingdom of righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

In this spirit, amid the noise of the trumpet and the alarm of war, we will abide in a solemn and humbled retirement of spirit, like Israel in the night

when the angel of the Lord passed through the land to smite the first-born, and they, shut up in their houses, kept the passover of gratitude and fear, while a great cry went throughout all the land of Egypt. And do we sigh over this picture in hopeless dejection? Do we believe the attainment of such a spirit to be impossible? Do we ask where shall we seek or find it? Blessed be God, who hath given such power to men!—not in the cloister, nor in the cell, nor in those retired and shaded walks of human life that seem formed for knowledge and converse with divine things—it may *be found in the blaze of a battle, and in the life of a hero.*

I speak of the great person whose death has, as on this day, clouded the enjoyment of victory. God only knoweth the heart; but if there be any dependence on those modes by which man makes his thoughts and feelings known

to man, *he* appears to have furnished an example of this spirit unequalled in the history of human nature—to have considered himself as called and commissioned for a great purpose; "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts;" and to have fulfilled it with that uniform and unmixed ascription of glory to God, which became him who was conscious of his high destination.

If we find it difficult even amid those modes of life which are most congenial to retirement and collectedness of mind, even in the solitude of the closet, the silence of midnight, the solemnity of the altar, to raise and fix our minds on those things which are "eternal and are not seen," what shall we say of him, who, amid the tumult, and madness, and fever of fight, assembled his prosperous bands to pour thanksgiving to the God of battles? If self is so diffused through

the whole frame of our thoughts and actions, that the satisfaction arising from our success is always mingled with the sin of ascribing it to our own powers, what shall we say of him, who, in the intoxication of recent success, could preface the intelligence of his triumph with "Almighty God has blessed his majesty's arms?" If to us the fear of death be so great that all the hopefulness of faith, and all the luminous consolations of religion, are unable to disperse its terrors, what shall we say of him whose immortal mind, controlling and surviving the wreck of his ruined frame, led him to die for the country he could no longer live for? Truly we must say, that, "if this man were not of God, he could do nothing."

I leave the subject with you, with confidence and without comment; for from what part of that existence may not instruction be drawn, which ended

the life of a hero with the death of a martyr?

Our task may not be thus awful—but may our spirit be thus upright! Our utility may not be thus extensive—but may our end be hallowed like his!

Now to God, &c.

CHARITY SERMON PREACHED FOR THE CHILDREN OF ST. AUDEON'S SCHOOL, DECEMBER, 1809.

EPISTLE TO TITUS, iii. 4.

The kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared.

How does the apostle verify his words? They contain, if true, a meaning most important to us. He declares that some signal instance of benevolence has been conferred by the Deity on his creatures.

The beneficence of a man may indeed be confined to a very small range: few may know it, and still fewer enjoy it. But the great sovereign of heaven cannot confer a favour that is not one of surpassing and unbounded magnificence.

Again, the apostle declares this benefit to have been conferred—not on su-

perior creatures—but on "man"—on ourselves, my friends, who are here.

Again, he declares that this gift "hath appeared"—mark that: it is nothing indefinite and invisible—no, but manifest and obvious, bestowed on and appearing amongst us. How important is this intelligence to us! The apostle declares that some signal blessing has been bestowed on us; that it has been made apparent among us, and that this blessing is the strongest proof of the mercy of him who only "has mercy"—of the love of that God "who is love." Now, in these words, he has applied to the senses and experience of all mankind. Have we received this blessing? Are we conscious of it? Are we enjoying it? Have we verified the apostle's joyful testimony to the privileges we enjoy?—The assertion is positive on his side, but the proof rests with ourselves. "Kindness and love!" perhaps I hear some child of mortality exclaim: "Alas! had

the apostle declared that the wrath and vengeance of the Deity against man had appeared—that it was inflicted on every portion of his existence, and apparent in every moment of his time, he would have declared a truth to which the cry of suffering nature every where echoes back a testimony. The kindness and love of the Deity might indeed have abundant exercise in removing from us some of those evils under whose weight we have been born only to bend and groan; but does the apostle assert that this has been the case? Does he bring us the intelligence of a single pain being remitted, a single evil spared?—No. Does he promise, or even seem to promise, in these words, health, plenty, the frolics of pleasure, the luxuries of wealth, the triumphs of genius, or the eminence of ambition?—No, as appears plainly by the context—there was no such thing in the apostle's thoughts. Away, then, with this talk of kindness and love,

where for one poor precarious good accorded, we see ten thousand substantial and permanent evils inflicted! Where shall we seek this kindness? Is it in the physical state of man, whose body is liable to a thousand external dangers and internal mischiefs, who is menaced with death by the very air that gives him life, and the earth that grants him subsistence —whose best-constructed frame lasts but seventy years, till its strength is turned into "labour and sorrow," while half the bodies in the world scarce totter through half that time, trembling with infirmity, or tortured with pain? Is it in his mind, that from one end of his existence to the other is the victim of a thousand passions, whose dreadful ravage, while it ruins his peace, is wasting his frame —his mind, of which the proudest powers may in a moment be levelled with the meanest, and exhibit a *Swift* and an *idiot* meeting in the same hospital? Is it in his fortune, in which vicissitudes

every moment occur that confound all his foresight to prevent, or his strength to contend against—vicissitudes that in an hour bring a man to wait at the doors of those who once thought it an honour to be admitted into his—ay, to share with the beggars those alms which he once distributed to them—vicissitudes through which we have ourselves beheld princes and the mighty of the earth—not asking for crowns, but almost asking for bread? Is it in his habitation, the earth, where all the elements are armed against him—where the very prince of the power of the air seems let loose at times to ravage his works and destroy his subsistence—where the tempest shakes his dwelling, and the calm breathes pestilence and disease? Is it amid such scenes, and under such evidences as these, that the apostle pronounces that the kindness of the Deity has appeared? His kindness might

appear in numberless repeals of actual miseries. When famine hovers over the land, drying up the very springs of human nature along with the fruits of the earth, and making the mother envy the famished babe the morsel she hardly spares it, could he not by a word strike the earth, which he has hardened into rock, and make the waters of abundance flow forth? When the storm ravages half a country, could not he chain up the wings of the wind, and say to the elements, "peace—be still?" When Death stands sentinel over the couch of his victims in the pest-house, where "Despair tends the sick," could he not bid his angel descend upon the waters of mortality, and cause the sufferers to be whole? Wherefore is all this evil unmitigated, unremoved?—Is it amid such scenes, and to such sufferers, that it can be said "the kindness and love of God hath appeared?"

We answer with mingled confidence and awe,—It is. And we answer it on the same ground on which such a question was solved two thousand years ago, "Then thought I to understand this matter, but it was too hard for me, *until I went into the sanctuary of God.*"—While to the philosopher or the mere moralist—to the man who looks on things as they lie around him, but never looks upward or beyond, all things appear in a state of darkness and distraction;—to the *Christian*, the man who reads the Bible and believes it, every thing is regular, consistent, and luminous; and the truth of revelation, while it accords with, becomes also the *interpreter* of the universal testimony of nature. All the awful phenomena I have described are the results of one cause, the evidences of one great truth—man has fallen, man is a sinner. An apostle has answered the question which while ten thousand human tongues daily repeat, no tongue merely

human can answer. "By man sin entered the world—and death by sin;" and by death pain, and sorrow, and suffering: to this cause is every complaint to be ascribed that ever passed human lips. And you, my friends; I call on you, to confirm this testimony by your own experience. What has been the cause to you of every pain of body or of mind you have ever borne? You have all trembled and wept, feared and hoped. What has been the cause of your sufferings—of every thing that has ever contracted your brow or wrung your heart? what is it that perpetually tears you from yourselves—from your happiness—from your God? It is sin—it is that power which, seducing us to believe that we can be made happy by other means than the knowledge and love of the Most High, leads us to place our affections upon the lying vanities of life, harasses us during the conflict with all its passions and evils, and terminates it at last in disappoint-

ment or in despair. This is the cause of the thousand evils man suffers. Natural evils are only the consequence of those that exist within us. Man is unhappy, not because the world is hostile to his happiness, but because he is a guilty creature—and no guilty creature can be happy while he remains in that state. While our passions and our vices hold dominion over us, we must, like Satan in paradise, behold every thing with envy and despair. Were all the elements at peace, man is an enemy to himself. If the never-dying worm *were* dead, and the unquenchable fire *were* quenched, sin would still be hell enough to its captives. If it were possible to remove every evil and misery in nature, we must still be unhappy; because the source of unhappiness is still within, though we foolishly lay the blame on earth, and heaven, and every thing but ourselves. Oh! ye, whose hearts are devoted to pleasure, were you this moment saturated

in its stream, the consequence must be —what? not happiness, but satiety and disgust: you would, like the ancient monarch, offer half a kingdom to one who could invent a new pleasure,—and you would offer it in vain. Ye who are attempting to climb the eminences of life, were all its summits thrown beneath your feet, you would only sit down on them to weep that you had no more to ascend. This moment give the worldling wealth beyond the dream of avarice—the proud, the vain, and sensual, give them their idols—but have you given them happiness? Impossible: it is not in the gift of man, it is not within the enjoyment of a *sinner*. This is no vague declamation: examine your consciences, my friends. You who have trod the paths of life for any length of time—recollect from your earliest youth, did not a certain object present itself to you as eminently good, as one which if you could attain you would certainly be happy?

you pressed forward to the pursuit: by bending the whole force of your nature to one point, and by the interposition of circumstances which the world calls favorable, you perhaps attained it.—Are you happy? Nay, shake not the question from your hearts. Do you not at this moment see some other object equally distant? are you not pursuing it with the same avidity, the same restlessness, the same solicitude? and were your life equal to that of Methuselah, you would, if you followed nature, be still pursuing a chase ever renewed, ever disappointed. Oh! that you were wise—to know that the very passions which prompt your progress, make it impossible that its success should ever lead to happiness.

Have we now shewn the misery of man to proceed from his sinfulness? We have. Yes,—in the belief of that stupendous event to which our text refers we alone find an answer to the com-

plaints of all the murmurers, and the objections of all the sceptics that the world has ever produced: in this we find at once a solution of all the difficulties, and a remedy for all the evils of life—a final and irrefragable answer to the question which man has been asking the Deity since the creation, "why hast thou made me thus?" And they who believe that great truth,—they may well believe the apostolic testimony, that herein hath "kindness and love" appeared. And to those few who, truly believing this gospel, are faithfully following their Lord and Master in an humble, holy, heavenly-minded, and self-denied life—to them how does his "kindness and love" appear? Are wealth, and power, and pleasure placed within their reach? Are they exempted from death and suffering, from the assaults of the elements, and the evils of life? No—but while he has left them exposed for the short period of their mortal pilgrimage to the same evils with

their brethren of the flesh, he has given them a rich equivalent through that glory and immortality which he has brought to light through the gospel of his Son. He has made them happy as his *creatures* must be made happy—not in themselves, but in him. He has made them happy as mortal, perishing creatures must be made happy—not in this world, but in another. He has made them happy as guilty creatures can alone be made happy—not by being left to grovel in the mire of passion and vice—not by being indulged with the husks which their distempered appetites would love to feed on—but by renewing their natures, by converting their souls, by giving them repentance, a new mind, and "grace to walk with him in newness of life," by giving them to place their heart and happiness where their treasure *is*.

But need I urge arguments, when *facts* are before you? Need I pursue consequences, when examples—strong and living examples—are within your

reach—are standing in your sight? They stand before you in the persons of those children—those children for whom I am appointed to plead this day; and for whom I *will* plead by representing you and all as obnoxious to calamity as those for whom I implore relief. Death, to which by sin we are liable, has robbed them of parents and friends. That labour to which man, by the fall, has become fated to earn his bread, would fail to procure them food. Ignorance, irreligion, and vice, are armed to destroy their souls—want, weakness, and helplessness, menace the ruin of their bodies. Will you suffer them to perish under those evils of which the wisest of us cannot escape the danger—of which the best of us are often made to feel the infliction? There are fathers here;—fathers, I turn to you—you whose labours support a numerous race in ease and honor: Can you promise yourselves that death may not snatch you from their arms to-morrow—that

the provision your care has made for them may not be snatched from them by fraud and rapacity, and they be compelled to seek for that mercy these destitute creatures implore to-day from you? Are there mothers here? Let me turn to them. Have you laboured to remove from the minds of your children ignorance and vice, the traces of early sinfulness, and the curse of early passions? May you not be removed from them to-morrow, and they, abandoned to the care of a menial, want the mercy of that care which *you will not deny to these their representatives to-day?* Are there any here who stand alone in the world, without care and without kindred? I adjure them by the bonds of a common nature which they share with these destitute children—by those misfortunes we all have tasted or must taste —by those passions which have tormented us all—by the fear of that death to which our sinful nature has made us

all liable, have mercy on those whom in this relation I may literally call your own flesh and blood—ay, to the most wealthy and eminent of us all. Permit me to point out to you a few traces of that resemblance which exists between you. They are children—creatures who owe their being to another—the very nature of whose state is subjection, and whose first duty is obedience. You, too, my friends, are all children of one heavenly Father: in him you live, and move, and have your being; to him you owe all things, and for his glory you were created. Here, alas! are many grounds of resemblance. Childhood is helpless, is ignorant, and is corrupt. Childhood is helpless. These little creatures have no means of providing for their wants. They could neither provide nor prepare their daily food—they could not fabricate clothing to protect themselves from the air—they could not construct a shed to hide themselves—they " have not where

to lay their heads"—they have no means to resist the assaults of evil—no power to strive against the temptations to sin. And we, my friends, the children of a gracious God, who "causeth his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain upon the just and upon the unjust," we are this moment breathing *his* air—we are existing upon *his* earth—we are clothed, and fed, and sustained, and preserved by *his* bounty; and were that bounty withdrawn for a moment, we would become more destitute than the objects for whom I am pleading this moment.

Again, childhood is ignorant. Children know nothing but their wants; they require to be taught their duties. A child will not naturally obey his parents: he must be taught and told that obedience which he owes them. He will not naturally attend to his instruction: he must be informed of the mischiefs of ignorance. Long will a child

be fed and clothed before he can understand that he owes these blessings to another, and long before he can form an articulate sound expressive of gratitude, or before his heart can be enlarged to receive its impression. And we, my friends; are *we* not ignorant—*wilfully* ignorant—of the real value of the blessings that surround us, and of the gracious hand that bestows them: And has he not taught us to know us and himself? By every evidence of his works, by every dispensation of his providence, by every event of our lives, by every thought of our hearts, by our affection and our fears, by our joys and sorrows, by every thing he has taught us to know his power or his mercy—and in the gospel of his Son he has taught us to know himself as a God of love, as a God "forgiving iniquity," as a God whose "gift is eternal life through Jesus Christ."

Again, childhood is corrupt. Scripture and experience alike instruct us

that they are born in sin, and inheritors of a corrupt and fallen nature. Enough for vain theorists to talk of the innocence of human nature. They who have children *know that they are not little augels*—that from the first moment of reason they show the evil that is in them—that they have passions to be repressed—that they have vices to be resisted. While vain moralists tell us that vice is the consequence only of temptation, and that as they grow up they grow depraved, Christ was the only moral teacher that dared to tell man his *heart* was corrupt, his *nature* was depraved. And we, my friends, have been the disobedient, the rebellious children of our heavenly Father—we have all disobeyed his gracious commands—we have all opposed his gracious will; and has he left us to perish in our disobedience? No; blessed be his mercy, he has revealed his Son to us, that they "who believe in him should not perish, but have ever-

lasting life." And to those who have received, who are receiving, who are at this moment monuments of the mercy of the Deity—to such shall I plead in vain to extend that mercy to others? No; to such I know I shall not. I will adjure them in the name of Him, who, by bestowing on them wealth and distinction, has marked them out as the almoners of his mercy—I will adjure them largely to bestow that mercy on others. I will adjure those who have received from Him the means of knowledge, and the comforts of civilization, to extend them to those whom their instructions will humanize, and who will repay the blessing, by becoming the blessings of that society on which they must else be turned loose to ravage and to prey. Above all, I will adjure those who know and prize the inestimable blessings of the gospel, to communicate those blessings to the souls of perishing creatures, and let not our

" people be destroyed for lack of knowledge." And I will not adjure *such* in vain. Beloved, to you has been unfolded the way to everlasting life: *will* you block up that way to your fellow sinners? To you have been thrown open the gates of the city of refuge: *will* you close them on your fellow fugitives? The books of everlasting truth have been opened to you: *will* you shut and seal them up from these objects? *Will* you forbid " little children to come unto *him*" who hath bid them come? Will you tear the victims from the very sanctuary to which they are clinging? Will you, with more than the cruelty of Herod, murder the souls of these children? *You will*, if you deny this day to contribute largely—liberally to their relief. I ask not for them only bread—or raiment—or shelter—I ask for the life of the soul—for the words of everlasting life—for the Bible. I ask in the name of him who has taught you its value, and *dare* you refuse? You,

who mock my earnestness, go, and if you can, calculate the value of an immortal soul.

Beloved, I would speak one word more; I would speak of a man, who, had he thus pleaded before you, would have made you alike profuse of your wealth and your tears. In pleading for a public charity, I will speak of him; for, did I not, the "very stones would cry out"—I speak not of his zeal, his labours; I speak of that eloquence, at the sound of which, as of a mighty rushing wind, the spirit of charity has descended, and sat upon each of the assembly. Let not the decorum of this place be violated, when I add the name of Kirwan. Had he addressed you to-day, guilt would have trembled, and penitence would have wept—every eye had poured forth tears, and every hand been lavish of gold. Beloved, *is it the advocate or the cause that moves you?* I have not sought to work on your feel-

ings—I have stated to you the terrors of the Lord; knowing, that if one soul be brought to repentance, there will be more joy than if mountains of gold were heaped in that aisle.—I have laboured to lay before you those principles which can alone make us turn from dead works to serve the living God; because I know, that at the last day, not actions but motives will be weighed, and that no works are good, but those which are the works of love. I have not sought to move you by eloquence, or by passion; for the former I do not possess, and the latter I despise: but I have sought to commend myself to you by "manifestation of the truth."

I will not add another word. May the Almighty bless the seed that is sown, that it may bring forth "fruit to everlasting life."

Now to God, &c.

PREACHED ON WHITSUNDAY, 1815.

ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL, iii. 8.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.

It has been long a subject of remark, alike to those who regret, and to those who deride, the chilling indifference with which addresses from this place are listened to by the hearers. Accustomed to hear a repetition of the same topics urged at the same stated period, men suffer the importance of the subject to be *compromised* by a kind of *habit of listening* that excludes all attention; they listen from constraint, not from conviction, and imagine that they have discharged their duty, by permitting a certain quantity of sounds to enter their ears, without inquiring

whether one has smote the conscience, or touched the heart. But this indifference, so chilling and so infectious —this indifference that too often communicates itself to the speaker—(for we are but men, and who can force himself to speak with energy, who does not feel he is listened to with interest?)—this indifference is never more conspicuously shown than on occasions like this, when we have to address you on subjects that have been the topics of discussion almost since the institution of a church, and when every hearer comes prepared with the impression, that centuries ago the subject was exhausted—that he is but to listen to a repetition of that, which when heard first was heard with little delight, and exchanging the character of the Berean for the Athenian, only longs to hear "some new thing," instead of searching the Scriptures, to find "whether these things are so."

And yet, my friends (if you could pause

for one moment, and seriously awake to the inquiry), ask those consciences solemnly what is the cause of the indifference with which you listen to addresses from this place; could those consciences either assign an adequate cause, or justify you in that indifference? What are the subjects on which we address you? God—eternity—the interests of your immortal soul!—Are these unimportant? Are they to be listened to with indifference by beings who profess to believe in a God, to possess immortal souls, and who are conscious that they are hastening to eternity, where their destination will, in the lapse of a few years, be fixed in bliss or woe for ever and for ever? Oh! my friends, collect all the trifles that you suffer to pass through your minds while you sit here,—the worldly thoughts, the vacant dreams, the floating nothings of a relaxed mind,—weigh them all together—and a single thought, a single feeling, a bare image, however

transient or feeble, of God, or of our final mansion, bears down the scale against them: and so it would, if, instead of the wanderings of an unoccupied mind, the counsels of statesmen, and the wisdom of philosophers, were put into the balance,—if, held by the hand of reason, they would be found altogether lighter than vanity itself.

Why are we listened to with indifference? Is it because we are, like yourselves, weak and guilty worms of the dust, and that, conscious we participate in your infirmities, you cannot bear that we should rebuke them? Alas! my friends, what false reasoning is this! Is the value of truth, then, dependent on the teacher, or on itself? Would you forbear to fly from danger, even if an enemy warned you; and will you neglect your safety, because he who warns you is a *partaker of your danger?* Does not this give the truth a melan-

choly force, that it would want if issuing from the lips of an angel? It is true, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, but its inestimable value cannot be diminished; and whether uttered feebly or forcibly, at whatever time or place, the truth, like Him who revealed it, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and "whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear," by its immutable character, and not by the fluctuating interests of humanity, we warn you to "hear and live."

Since the erection of this building, hundreds have spoken from this spot, and hundreds, perhaps thousands, have listened from the seats which you occupy this day:—where are they now? They lie crumbling together in the grave! But this awful and discriminating epitaph has been written by an invisible hand upon their coffins, and will one day be read to an assembled world,—

that those who spoke, and those who listened with a conviction of the truths of the Gospel, however feebly delivered, will "verily have their reward;" while those who were assembled at the call of vanity, popularity, itching ears, or ambitious tongues, though they may claim to "prophesy in that name," and in that name "to have done many wonderful works," will at last hear the sentence, "*I never knew you; depart from me.*"

Think not of us, but of yourselves and of God! We are, like yourselves, struggling in the stormy ocean of life; if we make our way through it, the same strength can support you—and if we sink, what warning so strong, as the arm raised above the waves to show the danger for the *last* time? Reflect for a moment on the causes of this culpable, this perilous indifference! Can it be that the subject is not interesting? Impossible! there is no subject in life but this of perpetual and universal interest—

there is no subject but this, that appeals to every class of life, and every description of intellect—that terrifies Dives at the banquet, and consoles Lazarus at his gate—that is profound enough for the philosopher in his pride, and intelligible to the beggar in his humility—that, like the stroke of God's arm in the night of danger, is felt at once by "Pharaoh on the throne, and by the captive in the dungeon!"

Of those who are assembled here, there is not one perhaps who has an interest in common with another;—every one, if his heart was searched,—(and it will be searched one day,)—has some latent interest, some lurking passion, that excludes him from having perfect sympathy with his neighbours, and makes him believe that he has engrossed the only object of importance of life. The world in a thousand shapes fills every heart; and while it intoxicates us with its lying vanities, has the art to make us believe

that each of us individually is about to drain the only cordial drop its cup contains. Hence every one regards the pursuits of another with indifference or derision. The grave rebuke the gay, and the gay mock the grave; avarice and vanity, ambition and indolence, point in disdain at each other; each beholds the bubble burst upon which his neighbour has set his eyes and his heart, then views his own with complacency, and congratulates himself *that his bubble is not air*. In this infinite diversity of pursuits —in this perpetual intersection of opposite lines, is there one direction to which they all tend, one point in which all are united? Yes—divided as we are in life, we must all die—nay, we are all dying; the approach to the grave commenced from the very cradle. Separated as we are by the distinctions of society, we are all united as passengers to eternity; and whatever be our hopes or fears, our enjoyments or our terrors, God alone is the

supreme object of fear—eternity only commensurate to our hopes—Heaven alone sufficient for enjoyment,—and Hell for terror.

Yes, it is alike the lesson of Scripture and of experience—alike the whisper of conscience and the voice of nature—that man is conscious of but two ideas that unite him to all his species—grief and eternity. And if these ideas be so—if our future destination be all that deserves the attention of an immortal soul that is hastening to it,—of what unspeakable importance are those great truths that are connected with it—those truths that develope its mysteries, and are associated with the nature and attributes of the Divinity himself—those truths, the firm conviction of which can alone support the soul when shaken and bowed by the storms of life,—and whose light, borrowed from Heaven, casts a gleam upon the darkest hours of mortality! Such is the great truth we commemorate

this day,—the existence and agency of the divine Spirit. I know it has been selected in every age as an object for the scoffs of the sceptic, the dangerous abuse of the enthusiast, and the indifference of the cold and careless professor—but what avails it? It has been revealed by Him who "cannot lie, and who will not deceive." It is the plain and positive doctrine of that book which contains all wisdom and all truth: and let the sceptic deride, and let the enthusiast abuse, and let the world be indifferent to it,—as long as it remains supported by the word of God, and the witness of his power in the hearts of his people, the weakest believer, with the Bible in his hand, conviction in his heart, and experience in his life, may hold out against the whole host of assailants, and defy the champions of infidelity, though with weapons comparatively feeble as David's, in the name of the living God.

. I know the apathy with which a defence of any of the emphatic doctrines of the Gospel is generally listened to. Men are well enough satisfied, in general, to combine professional Christianity with actual Deism; they will listen, without reluctance, to a general declamation about the existence of a Deity and a future state, but when we urge on them the great and discriminating truths of Scripture—those truths which make the Gospel differ from any religion devised by man—the great truths of the atonement, the influence of the Holy Spirit;—when we tell them, in the language of Scripture, that "eternal life is the gift of God," and that we are "saved by grace, through faith,"—then we meet with that coldness, that qualified assent, or actual rejection, that proves the world, though it names itself by the name of Christ, is yet a stranger to the most vital truths of the religion He taught. "These things may be true, but then it is only an article

of faith—it is but a speculative doctrine." Such is the language of the world, when it wants to depreciate what it cannot refute, and will not inquire into. This is neither the language of reason nor of Scripture. It is not the language of reason, because experience shews us, that man always acts upon certain principles that he *believes*, and acts only so far *as* he *believes* them. The whole business of life is carried on upon moral, political, or civil articles of faith. A man discharges the duties of a citizen, a subject, a soldier—he fulfils the charities of domestic life, as son, husband, or father, only so far as he believes himself to stand in those relations, and to be bound by their claims. Take away his belief of the obligations of law, of the power of the sovereign, and of the authority of a parent, and he will cease to fulfil the duties they prescribe. In like manner, take away the belief of the truth, and what foundation is left for

obedience to its precepts? These are *not* speculative doctrines—it is unscriptural to call them so. If by abstract doctrines be meant truths that, like those in philosophy, play round the head, but never touch the heart, I know of none such in the Bible. I will say more: if a single doctrine in the Bible can be produced, from which no practical consequence is drawn, I am content to give up the whole system. I will go further yet: I will not hesitate to say, that the more sublime the doctrine, the more potent and coercive is the practical consequence deduced from it: so true it is, that the connexion between principle is indissoluble, and that what "God hath joined, no man may put asunder."

No, my brethren, let us not deceive ourselves; it is not from a zeal for the interests of morality that men seek to depreciate the doctrines of the Bible as abstract and unfruitful; it is *from an apprehension of their being pressed with*

those practical consequences, whose purity and energy speak condemnation to their follies, their vices, and their lusts.

I would bring the question to issue upon the very truth declared in our text—the existence and agency of that divine Being who purifies the heart, rectifies the will, and enlightens the understanding of believers—does this bring a *practical* test along with it, or does it not? Mark the provident generality of the language: "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of God." While the reality of this divine influence is asserted as explicitly as language can speak, the mode of its operation is declared to be inscrutable. Here every confirmation is given to faith, but not the least license to enthusiasm: here is a reference not to feelings, but to facts; and to such a test will every scriptural Christian deem it

not merely his duty, but his joy, to submit. He will remember that these great truths were given to make him wise, not to contention, but "to salvation;" that Christians are not only called to believe in the existence of the Spirit, but, to "walk in the Spirit," and "to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit." Here is the strongest evidence of its existence, namely, the fruit of its operation; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

If it be demanded, how shall a man know whether he is under the influence of divine power, or only a perilous illusion of the imagination, I answer, not by a single act, however good and laudable—not by a strain of feeling, however intense and vivid—not by any series of devotional acts, however regular and consolatory—but by a conscious change of heart and mind, producing a corresponding change of life—by a heart "dead to the world, and alive to God:"

—by the whole course and current of life flowing in a new channel, no longer wearing itself in a fretful struggle against the rocks of life, but a placid, steady, onward course to eternity.

The Christian who feels himself enabled to resist the temptations that once seduced—to shun the enjoyments that charm him now no more—to subdue the passions that once tormented and distracted him; who, when the bitter feeling swells his heart, or the keen answer rises to his lips, feels more pleasure in subduing these sparks of fiery nature, than ever he did in indulging their blaze—who, when friends desert, the world frowns, sickness assails, or sorrow oppresses, is conscious of a peace that the world cannot give nor take away, an hope full of immortality—who feels, that where his treasure is, there his heart is also—and knows, that all things that seem evil to nature, are "working together for his good:"—he who feels thus, has "the

witness of the Spirit" in himself, for he knows that it is as much above the powers of nature, as it is opposite to its tendencies—he knows it is not the power of man, but of God. And is this error? is this enthusiasm? Oh! heed them not who tell you so, or heed them only to answer them thus:—if it be a delusion, we will hold it even unto death.

Little does it avail, my brethren, the doctrines we profess, unless their influence be extended to our lives; little avails the purity of our creeds, unless they purify our hearts. Do we, indeed, receive the doctrines revealed in the word of God, as the substance of our faith, and the ground of our hope?—it is well. But are we living under their experimental influence? Are we "doers of the word, not hearers only?" Has the seed implanted by the heavenly sower brought forth "fruit unto everlasting life?" No man that, with the pages of his Bible, seriously examines his heart

and life, can long be at a loss for the answer to these questions. The fruits of the spirit are clearly defined, and easily known; they are "love, joy, and peace;" and they are whatsoever things are "good, and pure, and lovely." Are we living under a spirit different from this?—then let us repent, and turn to that God who giveth his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Are these indeed ours—or even a part—or even a semblance of them? then let us cherish them as the gift of God—let us cultivate them by daily prayers, by the study of the Bible, by every good word and work: let us go on from strength to strength, "adding to our faith virtue," and progressively advancing in the way of his will, and the works of his commandments, and through the grace of Him who hath called us, we shall "make our calling and election sure."

Now to God, &c.

ACTS xxii. 37.

And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him.

THIS is one of the passages which no book but the Bible ever contained, and which, by uniting the affections of this world with the interests of eternity—by touching the heart while it elevates the soul, proves itself the work of that being who is Lord of both worlds, and who, while, in the language of the prophet, he draws us to himself "by the cords of a man,"—by those strong affections that are felt and acted on daily and commonly,—employs those very ties to bind us to another world, and softens our hearts, only that he may imprint the seal of eternity on them while the impression is yet warm. If we look over the Bible, we find every where the same merciful and providential character in the

writing—no ties are mentioned and no feelings inspired but those of nature and duty, yet those are rendered more interesting than those which passion and imagination have conspired to embellish. The history of the Old Testament alone puts all other history to the blush for its powerful appeals to the heart, its searching call on the strongest sympathies of our nature. Who is a father, and has not trembled when Abraham, at the command of God, journeys to a desolate mountain with his only mortal hope, the child given and reclaimed by God, and, "stretches forth his hand to slay his son?" Even the children in our pews have been visibly affected when the angel of God stays the hand of the wretched father, and calls on him not to touch the lad. Who is a brother, and feels not the joy with which Joseph felt his bowels yearn towards his brother —the constraint with which he sought where he might weep, and entered into

his chamber and wept there? Who is a son, and feels not the joy with which he welcomed into Egypt the father who had declared that his death would bring his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, and soothes the last hours of his declining age by causing them to pass in peace and prosperity; and placing under his dying hands even the sons of that son, whom he had never hoped to see, and imploring his benediction for the living, not demanding his tears for the dead? Above all, who is a father, and can read without agonies of heart, which only a father can feel, the mourning of David for his beloved and guilty Absalom? Who can see the picture painted, not to the eye but to the heart of the old king,—at once deserted by his child and insulted by a rebel, sitting in anxious misery in the turrets of his city gate,—and when messenger after messenger arrives with "good tidings" of an insurrection suppressed, and his life and kingdom preserved,—

demanding only—" is the young man Absalom alive?" and when, at length, the intelligence comes that the rebellion had been extinguished in the death of that son, answering the joyful news with the thrilling cry of "Absalom, my son, my son! would to God I had died for thee, my son!"

My brethren, these are things that touch the heart; and they do more, they teach it. There are said to be trees in foreign regions that yield their fruit only when struck by heavy blows; but such blows are salutary and productive: and such are those which the blessed Scriptures give our hearts in their narratives —our hearts are smote while reading them; but the blow brings forth fruit unto life everlasting.

In the gospel of Christ, that "high priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," that "Jesus who wept," we are justified in looking for the strongest sympathies with our natural

feelings, and we are not disappointed. His parables are full of mercy. His Samaritan pauses, and pities the sufferings of the wounded traveller. The father sees the prodigal repenting child, and hastens to weep on his neck. The shepherd rejoices over the sheep he has lost. May I dare to add, that the Divine Being, who borrows these images to illustrate to sinful man the mercy of God, could have no interest, no feeling in them, but what was borrowed from the divine commission which he deigned to fulfil! He suffered, not because *he*, but *man*, was guilty. He wept, not because *he*, but *man*, was miserable. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He accommodated his divine instructions to our capacity. He became a man of sorrows because we are acquainted with grief. He assumed the form of a servant, that man might learn to take up his cross and follow him. His apostles trod closely in his footsteps.

They were men of love and grief; men acquainted, intimately acquainted, with the best and the most melancholy states of human life. Those which are the best are perhaps the most melancholy:—joy seldom stays with us long; and, when it leaves us, leaves nothing but agitation, or regret:—grief remains long, and leaves a lesson and a blessing. The apostles, who were men, have left us the records of human infirmity and human suffering;—inestimable records! Had they been prosperous, honoured men, what could we have learned from them? Nothing to do us good. But Thomas doubted his Lord; Peter denied him; Paul persecuted his followers: these are all human examples, and by these we may be benefited. From Thomas we may learn the shame of incredulity—and we have all doubted in our moments of distress;—from Peter the anguish of repentance—and we all have been or will be in need of repentance:—from Paul we may learn much. He is

the only apostle whose life has been recorded at length in the Acts; and no passage of it is more instructive, more affecting, more consoling, than that which I have selected for our text this day. We are all acquainted with the original narrative. Paul, when visiting the churches of Asia, deemed himself summoned by the Divine Spirit to testify the gospel at Jerusalem. I must say, that, were I an infidel, his situation would convince me of his sincerity. He had no earthly motive to go there: among the churches in Asia his function was honoured and his person was safe. He had no worldly motive to tempt him away: a prophet announced to him persecution there. He himself allowed that the Holy Ghost testified that there did bonds and afflictions abide him. His weeping brethren hung on his neck to detain him: yet he went, confident in that God who could support him under the trials to which he called him, and firmly, but affectionately,

expostulating with the church who would have detained him:—"What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart." I know not in history, ancient or modern—I know not in the history of man, private or public, a more affecting passage than that which follows: when the apostle's resolution was taken, when he was parting for ever from his beloved church,—"They all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him."

There is a dignity in Christian sorrow that all other dignity sinks under. Even those who, at this last parting, wept the most, had the highest consolation—they knew that the parting was not eternal—they felt that they might weep; but, in the language of their Divine Master, they would after rejoice, and their joy no man could take from them. Let us imagine the feelings of the desolate brethren as they retired from the spot, where they beheld, for the last time, with mortal eyes, the form of their beloved teacher.

Grief was their first impression;—they wept, and God forgave their tears: but was that all? Oh no; more, much more remained. He left them; but he left with them a legacy invaluable—his example. They sorrowed not as those who had no hope: they had a treasure left with them, ten thousand fold enhanced by the absence of its possessor and its bequeather—yes, *by his absence*. His presence would not have been half so effectual. Such is our perverseness, that the men who come in and go out among us, who may be with us every and any day, can never be valued like those who part from us; and those who part from us but for a season, whom we hope to see again, are not valued as those who part without a hope of return. In these happy climates we see the sun set without emotion, because we look for his return to-morrow; but there are countries where the sun sets for half a year; with what agonizing eyes must those

look upon his departure, who may never see him again? To bring the case nearer to our own feelings, my brethren; we have all been in the habit of hearing the sacred, salutary admonitions of a friend, a brother, a parent, a pastor; perhaps we slighted them, in the thoughts that if we needed them we could have them whenever we wished it. But suppose them uttered for the last time,—suppose our human relatives, suppose our Christian pastor, uttered for the *last time*, with weak and broken voice, the advice that we never could hear again, what would be the effect on our souls? Oh! they would sink into the very bottom of them! Paul had long been conversant with the churches of Asia—he had often preached, he had always practised among them the lessons he taught—but we never read of their deep and painful sense of his value till the moment of his departure: doubtless, then they grasped at every word he uttered; and the very

tears they shed formed channels in their souls in which the stream of his last words flowed for ever and ever. This is the law of the heart, the law of nature, and of experience; nothing can alter it. Imagine the advice of a friend, a parent, a pastor, given in a moment of doubt and distress; perhaps it might be attended to, perhaps not; imagine it their last, the last and only words you could ever hear from their living lips; imagine that it contained a request which, while it consulted your interest, proved your remembrance of their affection,—if a human pulse beat within your hearts, if you could feel the appeal of a power to restrain your passions, or regulate your lives, it would be drawn from that remembered exhortation. All the words uttered by the living are not so powerful as a single one uttered by the dead—nay, all the admonitions that can be uttered by those who live among us can never have the power of a single word

uttered by those who are parting from us, and parting for ever. The shekel of the sanctuary outweighed all other gold of Hebrew coin; the parting word of a friend, the friend of our souls, must outweigh all other words; let its value be remembered for ever!

There are two views under which advice so given must necessarily possess a value indescribable; in which the advice of the absent must far outweigh that of the present. The first is, that we are able to retain, to cherish, and to walk by it, without the disturbing interruptions which the presence of a friend, with all its train of human infirmity, must necessarily cause. Wretched, perverse beings as we are; our sole business in life seems to be to magnify the errors and weaknesses of those around us—perhaps to divert our attention from our own, or console us under their consciousness of them—perhaps to screen ourselves from the necessity of following the advice of beings

who have their own errors to correct. But absence, like death, is a great softener of the heart; then all competition ceases; prejudice is no more. The defects of a departed character are diminished, its excellences blaze out, and reproach our former blindness to them. Absence, like night, may throw a darkness over the soul; but, like night, it reveals ten thousand stars that were hid by day, when we walked in the light of the countenance of our friend. Thus the feelings and recollections, that the departure of a friend inspires, are all of a moral and salutary nature. They infuse that softness, that pliability, that disposition to remember only what is good, which are the very essentials of a Christ-like temper and habit of soul. There is a relaxation in them that is not dangerous, a pain that is pleasure. Such a visitation may rend the heart with furrows of affliction, but it drops precious seed into every indentature it makes; it wounds,

that it may pour in oil and wine into the wound. To a contemplative and touched spirit, the last ray of the setting sun is worth all his noon-day light.

Lastly; these recollections are useful in the highest and best sense, because they lead the mind directly to eternity. Oh, how superior, in this view, is the wisdom which "is from above" to all that the world can learn or teach! How much is the Christian Lazarus, if he believes his Bible, above the man rich in all the wisdom of the earth! Why is it that we feel a delight in the tears we shed for a parted friend? why do we cherish the delicious melancholy attendant on their recollections? why do we go back, again and again, to that thought of them that dwells at the bottom of our heart, as Mary went to the tomb of her brother Lazarus, to weep there? It is because we know we have not parted; we have only separated, and shall be united again, where our meeting shall

be without grief and without termination: the very strength and vitality of our recollections form a connecting link between us by which "they, being dead, yet speak." How little can we learn these inestimable lessons from any source but our Bible! That alone can teach us to feel and to apply them,—can make memory more powerful than sight,—recollection operate even beyond example,—distance more instructive than proximity,—and time, in all its modifications, pay homage to the powers of the world to come, and the interests of eternity. We know all that man can do; and know that all is nothing. We have the writings of those men called the ancients, so injudiciously put into the hands of youth as models of truth, wisdom, and purity, but seldom marked with the due reprobation of their impurity, their ignorance, and their falsity. What do we find there? vague declamation, rash conjecture, unprofitable disputation; no consolation, no hope,

"no anchor of the soul," sure and steadfast. It was their misfortune, doubtless; but it is our crime to elevate that misfortune almost into a virtue. But when we look into our Bibles, we behold the very human affections and feelings consecrated and dignified by an ulterior reference, a view that "entereth within the veil," a "hope full of immortality." When we hear one apostle announce himself as Paul the aged, and declare that he is "ready to be offered, and the time of his departure is at hand;" when another proclaims, he must soon "put off his earthly tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus had shewed him," it touches us more than to hear the same Paul, standing on Mars Hill amid the confuted philosophy of the heathen world; or the same Peter, defying the whole Jewish sanhedrim, and putting to his trembling judges that searching appeal, "whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."

Yes, my brethren; these things "are good and profitable unto men:" the recollection of departed worth is precious, and it is useful. There are many single qualities scattered through life for our instruction. Age is there to remind us of eternity—piety, to point the way to it—affection, to urge and sustain—and pastoral authority, to guide and direct us in the way. Such are often met separately, and separately we have felt their influence. We naturally love age, honour piety, return affection, and reverence authority. When combined *in one*, their influence ought to be strong, salutary, and permanent. If there be such an one in life, aged, pious, affectionate, and dignified—if we have seen him—if we have heard him—if we have lost him—his example yet remains to us—and if we follow that, our separation cannot be long, and *will not be final.*

Now to God, &c.

SERMON PREACHED ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR 1817.

ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL, xiii. 7.

Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

THE author of the epistle to the Hebrews has characterized Jesus Christ as a merciful and faithful high-priest, as one who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Every part of his dispensation confirms this character.

He is a faithful high-priest, for he hath declared the whole counsel of God, revealed his true character and attributes, and defined our relation to him and its consequent duties, with a fulness and fidelity which leave to scepticism little evasion, and to disobedience no excuse.

Unlike earthly teachers, who, consulting their own prejudices, or the prejudices of those who hear them, compro-

mise the divine character, make a sacrifice either of his mercy or his justice, and represent him according to their own erring views and tempers, either as a Being of neutralized attributes, looking on good and evil with indiscriminate complacency—or as a Being of rigorous and vindictive severity, exacting the debt of pence as well as that of talents; and in both cases condemning the insolvent, and giving him over into the hands of the tormentors until he shall pay the uttermost farthing: —unlike, and in opposition to this, Jesus was a faithful high-priest, one who represented the Deity, such as he is, not such as the corrupt imaginations of man represent him.

Our Lord has condescended through himself, and through his apostles, to give what may be called the character of the Deity—it is obscured by no nice and metaphysical distinctions—it is involved in no mysterious and figurative lan-

guage—it is not designed to astonish the ear, but to awaken the conscience—not to dazzle the imagination, but to touch the heart. Christ declares, that God is a spirit—and his apostle proclaims that God is light, and that God is love: thus is Christ a faithful high-priest, and in revealing the real character of the Deity, he hath proclaimed the most important truth ever proclaimed to man.

He was also a merciful high-priest; one who, though he makes no allowance for human depravity, can yet be touched with the "feeling of human infirmity;" and of this the strongest and most gracious proofs occur throughout the whole of his ministry.

He was one who, though he came to introduce a new dispensation, executed his office with a tender reverence for that which was fulfilled, and was to pass away—while he derided and exposed the frivolous superstitions of the Pharisees, he announced that "not a jot or a

tittle should pass from the law till all was fulfilled"—while he taught that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," he also exhorted to "attend to those who sat in Moses' seat; and observe and do all that they required"—while in defiance of the ignorant and inhuman prejudices of the Jews, he openly healed on the Sabbath day, he also commanded the lepers to go shew themselves unto the priests, and "offer what Moses commanded for a testimony unto them;" thus paying all due and necessary respect to the forms of the law, even when he knew them to be but forms, and at the moment when he himself, who was the "end of the law for righteousness," was about to embody and translate its essence into a far purer and more spiritual dispensation. A strong trait of this character of mercy, this character, which, bending to the weakness of man, disdains all temporizing with vices, is discoverable not only in the manner in

which he sealed the dismission of the Jewish dispensation, but in that in which he instituted his own. His was no local religion—it consisted not in forms or ceremonies—it bound men by no ties of time or place. He appointed but two simple rites, and neither of these is required to be performed at any particular period, or in any allotted place. His was no religion of feasts and fasts, made up of the "beggarly elements" of periodical rites and outward celebrations.

Hear the merciful generality of language in which the rites (which indicate introduction into his church, and the commemoration of his death) are announced:—"Go ye and preach the Gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!" Hear his invitation to his last solemn institution:—"Do this in remembrance of me!".

Here is no circumscription to time or place, no petty dependence on modes or

forms. Let it not be deemed an irreverent comparison to say, here is nothing like the religion of the impostor of the East, which requires a pilgrimage to his tomb as a test of sanctimony, from persons of various nations, under every difficulty of climate, and season, and age, and habit. Here is nothing like the demands of that awful corruption of Christianity, that places a distinguished merit of its professors in visiting the saints and shrines of various countries, under a pretended notion of their superior sanctity, as if the Deity had really made one part of the earth more holy than another; or as if the dust we tread on could ever send a deeper or more salutary feeling to the heart than the conviction that we must mingle with it and be dust ourselves. All in the Gospel is unlimited as the mercy of its author; and when we read our Bibles we must be struck with one profound impression—how different is the religion we meet there from the

forms of it existing in the world even under its name!

But though the religion of Christ is not (like all false systems) made up of localities, yet there are about it strong proofs of its being adapted to all the pardonable weaknesses of human nature, proofs that it is the religion of Him who made the human heart, and who knew all the weaknesses and all the windings of the thing he made. Thus we find him always bending with merciful and provident lenity to all the topics of time and place that could usefully and salutarily affect the mind. He never omitted the mention of either, when either could minister—not to the *form*, but to the *spirit* of the lesson he gave. Thus in passing through the fields white already to harvest, his language is, "Pray ye the lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest;" thus, in condescending allusion to the humble occupation of his disciples, who were

fishermen, he exclaims, "I will make you fishers of men;" thus also he deigns to illustrate the operation of the Holy Spirit by an allusion to the simplest phenomena of nature, proclaiming its certainty, yet guarding against its abuse, by the singular and felicitous caution of his language,—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Thus he even avails himself of the aspect of the heavens to reproach the Jews with their wilful insensibility to the mighty works that had been done among them,—"Ye say it will be a storm, for the sky is red and lowering—ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but ye cannot discern the signs of the times."

In the spirit then of that religion which rejects all that is superstitious, but retains all that is salutary in these local remembrances, let us, my brethren, avail

ourselves of the consideration of the solemn period at which we have arrived, to commune with our own hearts, and in our chambers, and be (for a season) still! God has been pleased to add to our lives the promise of another year:—in the past many have been "cut down who cumbered the ground," and many who adorned it; we have been spared, spared that we might bring forth fruit, and that the long-suffering of God might lead us to repentance. Life is a continued miracle; yet we live and move and have our being, without a thought of Him on whom all depend; and nothing but the suspension of existence in those around us (accompanied by sudden and terrible phenomena), ever leads us to think with wonder or gratitude of the preservation of our own. When, as we tread the public ways, or sit within our chambers, the spectacle of the intelligence of a fellow-creature suddenly summoned to eternity, carried off without

respite or reprieve to an irreversible destination, unexpectedly reaches us;—then we perhaps shudder at the reflection that such might have been our fate; but do we ever reflect that it requires as much the active providence of God to support our existence from one moment to another as it does to remove it by the blast of violence, or the blow of casualty? Above all, while congratulating ourselves with short-sighted selfishness that we have not been cut down, do we reflect on the awful state of that being, snatched away by that sentence which perhaps smote him as a "cumberer of the ground?" Do we ask ourselves, might not such a sentence smite us, and justly also? Do we reflect that every added moment of life is an added instance of divine mercy, procured perhaps by the intercession of that powerful mediator, who is praying the Father for us in the language of the text, Spare it this year, and if it bring forth fruit, well!

My brethren; let us learn from the past, for the past is a faithful, stern teacher; the future is always a deceiver, for it is arrayed in the colours of hope and imagination; but in the past there can be no illusion; its lessons are irrevocably written in the vast page of "time gone by," and there those who wish for wisdom may read them—if they have memory, and profit by them—if they have hearts. In order to know how to commence this year well, let us throw back our mind's eye over those years that are gone, and inquire how we have expended them. That they are *gone* is all our first hurried and abashed glance can discover. Gone!—Awful epitaph on departed time!—years on years have thus "died and made no sign." When we view them more closely, we discover perhaps that we commenced some of our past years with hopes and resolutions sanguine and vigorous, with intentions of fortifying our interests, aggrandizing our importance, and gratify-

ing our passions. We began them perhaps with schemes that the world would call wise, and hopes that the world would deem delightful. What has been the result?—successful or unsuccessful, I dare to pronounce that the result has been disappointment and vexation of spirit—we have grasped the bubble, and have found it air. With whatever wisdom our plans have been laid, with whatever zeal they have been pursued, with whatever energy they have been carried into effect, they are now like as a dream; we awake and wonder at the delusion under which we toiled and laboured, "wrought in the fire," and "wearied ourselves for very vanity." Yes, disappointment has been, *must be*, the result of our pursuits and passions, because they were "of the earth, earthly;" because in their very nature they were hollow, worthless, and false, and they communicated that nature to their object—they were unworthy of the energies of a thinking spirit, un-

worthy of the dignity of an immortal soul!

I do not speak of objects avowedly vicious and immoral; they carry their condemnation and their punishment too along with them; like Cain's, their mark may be read by all mankind at sight. I speak of the ordinary objects of life, those of which we have the art to flatter ourselves that our pursuit is laudable, and our success in them necessary and honourable. What is the result of the chase of these lying vanities? We are disappointed, either in failing to attain them, and thus being rendered wretched by the loss of that whose possession never could have made us happy; or—more mortifying to the illusions of our pride, by attaining them, and finding their possession to be emptiness, yea, "worse than nothing, and vanity."

Oh! it is destined that the grave of every departed pleasure should bear in large and legible characters for its epi-

taph—disappointment. Would to God the intoxication of our self-delusion would suffer us to read it—would that our pride would suffer us to read it—its lesson would make us humble and would make us wise! The tomb of a departed friend is scarcely so powerful a preacher as the grave of a buried lust.

My brethren, if these things be so—and who is there here, whose experience, however shallow, whose conscience, however feebly consulted, does not answer, *these things are so*—one solemn question presses itself on the soul: let us ask of ourselves sincerely, Had we commenced the last year, or any year of our lives, with a resolution to live more to God; to walk as becometh the Gospel, "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" to draw nearer to Him in our hearts and lives; to dedicate ourselves solemnly, sincerely, and unreservedly to Him, in obedience to the Gospel, and imitation of the example of his Son—if

we had done thus, *could* we have been disappointed? Should we have had to look back on a melancholy review of baffled struggles, and abortive illusions, at once nugatory and dismal, astonishing us by our weakness in being their slaves, and terrifying us by the recollection of our sufferings while we were?—Would this have befallen us? Impossible; the whole united force of earth and hell could never have defeated this great and good and "firm purpose of heart of cleaving to the Lord;" and the whole force of heaven would have been on our side and fought for us;—it would have been a purpose above the shocks of accident, the oppositions of interest, or the struggles of passion; its memory would have been bright in the page of time, and its record glorious in the volume of eternity.

Had we done thus, it had been well, and well is it for us that this may yet be done! We have been spared for another year; cumberers of the earth as we are,

we have not been cut down; the great master of the vineyard hath spared us, the great intercessor hath pleaded for us, and "if we bring forth fruit,"—well.

When we look back on our past years, we see many of them marked only by the melancholy characters of bodily infirmities increasing, worldly misfortunes harassing; friends alienated, distant, or dead; iniquity in the world abounding, and the love of many waxing cold; days marked only by pain, or by the absence of it reckoned for an enjoyment; and the sum of the dreary account leaving happiness much, much our debtor. To *recall* the past is impossible,—to *mourn* over it is folly,—to *learn* from it is wisdom, and happiness, and virtue.

Let us, if God spare us, for the future have to look back on *one year* in which we have turned from dead works to serve the living God, and let that year be the present. Many have gone by in the schemes of worldly wisdom, and we

have been made to feel that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God;" many in the pursuits of worldly interest, and we have been made to learn (perhaps literally) that we were "spending our money for that which was not meat, and our labour for that which satisfied not." Let us at last seek our true interest; let us place our treasure where neither corruption nor force can assail it, and where "our treasure is, there let our hearts be also." Many phantoms of hope have we been chasing, and returned baffled and weary from the pursuit,—let us now turn to grasp the only "hope that maketh not ashamed," the "good hope through grace," the "hope full of immortality." Many reeds have we leant on for support, and they have pierced the hand that trusted them; let us now turn to lean on the rock of ages, and everlasting security shall be ours. Weary and heavy-laden, let us come to Him who hath promised, and

He shall give us rest; He shall "wipe away all tears from our eyes," and guide our feet into the way from which they have wandered so long—the way of peace; the way that man (with all the ingenuity of his nature on the rack) could never discover for himself, or—if he did, would turn away from it. God alone can open it to him, invite him to approach, and conduct him in his progress. The powerful intercession of the Son of God has procured for us the hope of another year—let us devote it to Him whose gift it is, and let his grace sanctify that life which his mediation hath purchased:—let us remember that "we are not our own—we are bought with a price;" let us then henceforth live "not unto ourselves, but unto Him that died and rose again for us."

I shall trespass on your time no longer. He who made the human heart can alone penetrate its recesses; but

surely we are justified in availing ourselves of every topic that may give variety or power to truths so often urged, and too often in vain. By local recollections, by human associations, by the "cords of a man," by "the powers of the world to come," by all that we can borrow from time or from eternity to render our cry piercing and awful,—we should "reprove, rebuke, exhort, intreat;" "becoming all things to all men, that we might by all means gain some."

Often have I seen you in this place affected by the words of men;—oh that I could now see you touched and smote by the word of God! Lord, who searchest the heart, and to whom I dare appeal that I have spoken thy word in weakness but in truth, let thy treasure be kept no longer in a vessel of clay! Plead thou thyself with this people, turn them, and so alone shall they be turned unto Thee:—write on their hearts the

lesson of thy truth, not in words which "man teacheth," but "which the Holy Ghost teacheth." Spare them yet another year, and grant that thy long-suffering leading them to repentance, they may bring forth fruit unto life everlasting, through the mercies of Jesus Christ.

Now to God, &c.

PREACHED ON THE DEATH OF MY DEAR NIECE, SUSAN LEA, WHO DIED TWENTY-NINTH JUNE, 1818, AGED EIGHTEEN YEARS.

ST. MARK, x. 14.

Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.

WHEN we view the character of Christ as recorded in the Scriptures, we view the only one on human or inspired record capable, as an example, of universal application. Had the Son of God appeared on earth in all the plenitude of power—had he gone forth "conquering and to conquer"—what single rule of domestic life, what possible improvement of human happiness, could have been derived from his example? Nay, had he appeared as a wise and beneficent sovereign, reigning, like Solomon, in peace and sapience, his station would still have been too far removed from the ordinary

sympathies and interests of humanity to have allowed much benefit from the influence of example. How much must have been lost had he appeared under any other circumstances than those which he did—as "taking upon him the form of a servant"—as coming, not to be ministered unto, but to minister! How many lessons of the heart—how many pure and beautiful domestic truths—how many things that pierce and purify the hearts of men and women, and even children, in all the varied relations and endless charities of domestic life! In every part of that mode of life on which all must depend for happiness (for all, let their rank be what it may, must seek their happiness in domestic life, or be justly doomed to find it nowhere) we derive from Christ a lesson or an example. Do we seek for an instance of friendship, as touching as it is sublime? When Lazarus died, "Jesus wept"—when his sisters sorrowed, the Saviour of the world con-

soled them. His tale of the Prodigal Son, what child who has erred, and what parent who has forgiven, can read without yearning hearts and melting eyes! Nor did he confine his instructions to language alone, enriched as it was with the most lucid illustration, the most thrilling pathos, and the most powerful application. He not only taught the way, but was himself "the way" —"an ensample, that we should follow his steps." On the cross, amid those ineffable agonies, the extent and degree of which must for ever remain hid from mortal eyes, Jesus forgot not the tenderest duty of domestic life: he committed his mother to the care of his beloved disciple; and almost the last words he uttered recognised and hallowed the earliest and dearest of nature's ties—"Behold thy mother!"—The injunction was obeyed: "from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

Is there any thing to be added to this

picture? If there be,—if there is any thing imaginable more attractive, more conciliating to human habits, and to human hearts, it is, perhaps, that *Jesus loved children.* Under the impulse of a feeling that was right, and a superstition that was pardonable, some of the Jewish women brought their children to Christ, that he should touch them (imagining, as the ignorant always do, that a corporeal touch is either the medium or the substitute of a spiritual influence); his disciples rebuked them: but when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." Here is certainly the last and most exquisite touch given to that portrait of perfect humanity which the character of Christ exhibited.

In contemplating the Gospel, divines may ponder on those profound mysteries which it developes—those things which "angels desire to look into," and which

yet are disclosed to man;—moralists may pause to admire its beautiful and harmonious structure of divine ethics—a structure whose foundation is deeper, and whose summit higher, than human power could ever plan or raise. But in a religion intended to "bless all the families of the earth," to draw all the children of our heavenly Father by "the cords of a man," there must be something still more general and more potent—something that appeals not to a cultivated intellect, but to uncultivated nature,—something that even the weak can understand, and the cold can feel,—something that, like the stroke of the angel in the night of Egypt's visitation, may be felt at the same moment by the sovereign on the throne and the captive in the dungeon;—and this, all this, may be found in the Gospel. Jesus preached to the heart as well as to the head. What parent is not penetrated to the inmost fibres of the parental heart, when he

reads, that the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, called "little children to him, and forbad them not?".

In this gracious invitation, doubtless something more was meant than the expression of kindness denoted by the caress which accompanied it. Undoubtedly our Lord intimated, by these words, that children should be brought unto him in more than an outward sense—that they should be taught to embrace his religion, and to follow his example. In these words he has then bequeathed an inestimable legacy to parents:—May his own spirit enable us, my brethren, to use it aright!

Recent circumstances, occurring within my own immediate observation—within my own painful experience—have forced this subject on my thoughts—on my heart. Oh, that it might sink into yours, as it has into mine! I know we live in an age of education—an age in which children have every teacher, ex-

cept that faithful teacher who tells them that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom—an age in which our children can give a reason for every thing but "a reason for the faith that is in them." I know (and God forbid that I should undervalue our great modern advantages) that we live in an age when science is so far advanced, and a taste for knowledge and literature so widely diffused, that to be ignorant is almost to be infamous. I know, and am willing to admit, that the cultivation of the human intellect is the most important object in human life, with the single exception of the salvation of the immortal soul.

But do we seek to unite them? In our present system, do we not keep them inseparably asunder? Do we not place the world in one scale, and eternity in another, every day before the very eyes of our children—and before their very eyes suffer the latter to fly up and kick the

beam, though, after all, the undervalued weight may be found to press on our own souls like lead?

General language signifies nothing. Do Christian parents announce the Gospel to their children? A tremendous voice speaks to every parent in this assembly, *Do you?*—do you point out to your child the example of Christ, or the example of the world?—do you open the Bible before him?—do you bid him read the lessons of the simplicity, humility, and spiritual-mindedness of the Son of God? No: we pride ourselves in our children betraying every temper most opposite to those I have mentioned. If we are regular in our religious habits, we attend the church, of course, and require our children to attend it also. Contrasted with our domestic habits of religious negligence, what is the result of this glaring inconsistency? Just what we might expect—just what the result must be in young minds—a complete

contradiction, or a complete confusion of ideas, or a complete disregard of all those better thoughts that fight their way feebly and fruitlessly through the opposing host of prejudice and passion, and strengthening habits and corrupt nature. From this place they hear that Christ, their master, was poor and humble-minded; at home they learn that poverty is a crime, and humility a disgrace. Here they are instructed that the forgiveness of injuries is the first and most essential test of a genuine disciple of Christ; and at home, or at least in the world (and that is often the same), they learn that to resent or to retaliate them is the only thing that can raise them to the standard of manhood.

It would be useless, it would be nugatory, it would be disgusting, to pursue the parallel any further. I leave the experience of the most shallow, of the most heedless among you, to fill up the instances. If they were all faithfully

and forcibly traced, I suppose "the world could not contain the books that could be written." In one word, the world is made to shout in all its intoxicating, seductive, maddening tones in one ear, while eternity is scarce suffered to whisper in the other: and which has the best chance of being heard, let parents tell.

Is there any man professing the religion of Christ, however unexceptionable in his character—however serious in his demeanour—however regular in his habits, that lays the Bible on his family table, and says to his son,—My child, you are a Christian, or ought to be; your parents and sponsors by external rites have pledged themselves that you shall embrace the religion of Christ: Will you, or will you not? Will you be humble, pure, self-denying, holy, heavenly-minded, as Christ your master was? Will you be his disciple whose life and habits you read recorded in

those pages?—Is there such a question asked?—Oh! might it not be tremendously answered—might not the stripling rise up and demand—*Father, will you?*

What is the first great object of every parent? To give his children a good education. That is right: but what in the language of the world is a good education? The union of human learning, external accomplishments, and the manners of the world. And is this a *good education* for immortal beings, that confines their thoughts, their cares, their hearts to this world entirely, and leaves not a moment's time, nor an atom's space for one thought of God, the soul, or eternity? Let every parent ask himself the solemn question—Is my son mortal or immortal? shall he be educated with a view to his present or his future destination—for this world, or for the world to come? Let him "sit down and count the cost"—let him remember that the attainment of both objects united is impossi-

ble—that he cannot serve God and Mammon: let him, if he will, lay all that the world calls brilliant and eminent in one scale, place in the other the value of an immortal soul, and then see which way it should incline when held by the hands of one who calls himself a Christian.

Let me not be supposed here foolishly and fanatically to undervalue human learning and human advantages. No man prizes them more—perhaps too much;—but I would have them reduced to their real value, which is certainly far below the current one.—I would have children taught that the best use of talents and accomplishments is to adorn and dignify religion—I would have them made "*plates of gold as coverings for the altar*"—I would say to parents, teach your children all that human instruction can give, or human intelligence receive. Do so, and welcome: but teach them also that they

have souls, and that those souls have a maker. Give them the knowledge of all things that are useful, and all things that are desirable; but hide not from them the knowledge that "one thing is needful." Lead them to the instructions of every master you can procure, but "suffer them to come unto Christ, and forbid them not." And how is this to be done? Is it by committing our children to the care of a menial, who hears or does *not* hear them repeat a few words neither felt nor understood, which they term prayers? Is it by taking them to church, as a measure of constraint and weariness, making them listen to the word of God without explanation, and to the voice of the preacher without ever adverting to his instructions, except as a matter of verbal criticism, or satirical remark? Do they see the Bible studied at home? Do they behold the tempers and habits of the Gospel exercised there? Do they hear the Deity

mentioned habitually as the object of love and veneration? Or, to put the question in other words, do they ever see the Scriptures opened, except perhaps to look into the lessons of the day? or do they ever hear the name of God mentioned, except in oaths or ejaculations?

But there is something radically wrong in the very principle of modern education: it "savours not of the things that be of God, but the things that be of man." Our very morality is adjusted by a false and perverted standard. When we teach our children to subdue their tempers and to soften their manners, we regulate our instructions by the practice of this world. We recommend the virtues of temper to them not as *Christians*, but as *gentlemen*. When instilling good qualities into them, we corrupt them by the very mode in which we convey our instructions.

What! is the Bible then a dead letter?

'Has it not a rule of life, that extends to our lowest, as well as our loftiest duties? Amid its sublimest precepts, does it not teach us to "be pitiful, to be courteous?" What is there that man can need that is not there? What! shall a man who calls himself a christian father, if he wishes his child to acquire suavity of temper and mildness of manners, stand hesitating whether he draws his documents from the Gospel or from Chesterfield? How is it possible for children, brought up on the principles of modern education, to become spiritually minded? What is our first object for our sons? To make them good scholars. How is this attained? By putting into their hands books with whose abominable wickedness their minds are contaminated as soon as they can learn their meaning, and long before they can learn their beauties. We administer the poison with all the diligence in our power, and leave the antidote to chance.

I know I am on critical ground here—I know it is a daring thing to lift up one's voice against long established custom, sanctioned by high authority. I care not—if the custom be bad, no matter what authority supports it. I will lift up my voice against it, feeble as it is—I will "cry aloud, and spare not"—I will say it is the black and crying sin of civilized Europe, to compel their children to familiarize their young imaginations with the most brutal crimes, and force their unripened passions, by placing them in a hot-bed of unutterable impurity. This we do—this we have done for centuries—and this we shall answer for in eternity. Let me propose one plain question to the admirers of the classic writers, as they are called: If a father found his son reading such passages as occur in their books in his own language, would he not fling the vile pages into the flames, and scarce think those flames too bad for the

author?—What, then, are we so besotted with a mere name?—Would we spurn the abomination undisguised; and because it comes to us in the mask of a dead language are we to welcome the loathsome harlot, and introduce it to our children, and force them to caress and hold dalliance with it? Am I asked, would I banish these languages from the system of education? I answer, No—but I would not suffer a page of them to be read in school or college till it had been examined and purified, and made fit for the eyes of priest and virgins: ay, and if such purification reduced them to about one-tenth of their present bulk, God knows enough would remain for every purpose of instruction and delight. But this is not the sole evil of these books,—they furnish us with imposing examples of self-sufficient virtue, mischievously flattering to the pride of human nature, and, above all, to the presumption of youth. Dazzled and intoxicated by their false

splendor, we turn aside from the pure brightness of the *Gospel light, and lead our children along with us. It is easier as well as more flattering to have the virtues of a heathen than the graces of a Christian.* But, in the name of God, on which are we to depend at the hour of death and at the day of judgment? I would not forbid my son to study the great characters of antiquity; but I would warn him against adopting them for his models, or even suffering his imagination to be seduced by their distorted grandeur. Let him look to the Bible for his morality. I will never tell him to be just, because Aristides was just; or patient, because Socrates was patient; or temperate, because Lycurgus was temperate; or benevolent, because Titus was benevolent. No; I would tell him to be just, patient, temperate, and benevolent, because he is a Christian—because he is a servant and follower of Jesus Christ: that sums up all, and leaves no room for particular in-

stances. No; nor would I point out (to inflame his heart with love of the human race) the example of kings and heroes dying for countries they loved, and countrymen that adored their memories, —no, I would point out to him his master, Jesus, dying for a world that hated, reviled, and crucified him. Oh! a christian parent may lay his hand with a holy pride on the Bible, and say, I need not send my child for examples to Roman heroes and Grecian sages; here I have patriarchs—and prophets—and apostles —and the Son of God himself. I cannot look higher—I *dare not.*

I will pause here for a moment to remark, that even the most unexceptionable education may be counteracted by an improper introduction into life. How much more when that education itself prepares us for the worst parts of life, and sends us into society with passions all anticipated, and vices all flourishing in premature rankness. But what is the

mode of introduction into life for a young man? It is a kind of familiar shaking hands with all the vices at first meeting, like old acquaintance. Perhaps at the very first convivial meeting, where his own father is the guest or the president, obscenity and profanation are the first companions that greet him; and the dreadful price paid for his entrance into society is his innocence. Must we then fly to solitude to avoid corruption? No; a young man need neither be an hermit nor a monk of La Trappe; but let it not be supposed that his education is finished when his first intercourse with life commences—then, then is his utmost need of practical education. The ship does not want a pilot till she is launched. Then mark to him those distinctions which hitherto he has only known in theory; draw the strong line between good and evil, and lay you finger on the spot. Let him not be awed by rank, nor dazzled by wit, nor overpowered by

example. Sound it in his ears that vice is vice; and if a man be a drunkard, a swearer, an adulterer, an unbeliever—if he united all the graces and the muses in his mind and manners, mark that man, and shun *him*—his intercourse—and his example, as you would the pestilence. The forms of society may entitle him to respect, and pay it readily; but not a jot further. You must "render to God as well as to Cæsar." Let not the enemy of our souls ever be the friend of our hearts.

I have dwelt thus long on male education, because I know the dangers to which men are exposed are far greater than those which women have to encounter at the entrance of life. At another season I purpose also to review them. Let me add to my admonition a few words.

Parents—you who have a value for religion, will feel their power; you—with whom it is but a form of godliness—try to add to it the "power thereof;" feed your

children no longer with husks, give them the bread of their father's house: and you —if there be any such here—who have neither form nor power, Oh! yet, if ye reject Christ yourselves, "suffer your children to come unto him, and forbid them not." Their prayers may plead for you—their example may convert your souls.

The consideration of the infinite superiority of a religious education has been forced on my mind by an instance, which, painful as it was, was also most powerful. Nor let me be thought to depart from the decorum of this place if I mention it. What, indeed, should forbid me from this place to speak of the dead? This is the place to speak of them.

I knew one who entered life with advantages such as few of her sex possess: young—very young, beautiful, accomplished, affluent, the idol of her family, the delight of every eye that saw her. She grew as fair and fresh as the gourd

over the head of Jonah; but God had prepared a worm to smite the gourd—and it withered. I saw her suffer—I saw her die. She lingered through two whole years of torture unexampled and unmitigated. I often saw her lip turn white with agony—I never saw it quiver with a murmur. Her youth struggled hard with death, and her friends clung to hope, while there was a hope to cling to. While she could yet walk, she frequented the house of God: when she could no longer do so, she worshipped him from her bed of suffering. Hope and faith were with her there, and her charity "never failed:" her last action was to press with her cold hand into mine her accustomed ample bounty to the poor. By her death-bed stood her triumphant mother—yes, triumphant—for grief, that conqueror of all things human, contends in vain with the power of the Gospel.

What supported that mother in that hour? She had led her, when a little child,

to Jesus, and now she resigned her to him—ay, and with a happier spirit than if she had stood at the altar to give her daughter's hand to the first and fairest of the sons of men. What consolation could that mother have then derived from the sight of withered youth, faded beauty, and prostrate talents? None—her consolation was from above. She saw her young pilgrim going to the promised land, and the view enabled her to watch her as she passed through the waves of Jordan.

Parents, and all who hear me, you may one day be called to her trial—would you not wish for her consolation? Worlds—worlds would you give for it then! Purchase, oh! purchase it now! The price is easy, is delightful: it is this—that you "suffer your children to come unto Christ, and forbid them not."

Now to God, &c.

ST. MARK, x. 14.

Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.

THE last time I addressed you from this place, my brethren, I intimated my intention of speaking a few words to you on the subject of the education of females. I said then that I deferred that subject because women were exposed to less danger than men:—I retract that opinion. The danger is the same—the danger must be the same to all spiritual beings who are led to forget or to neglect their spiritual destination. The danger to women in life is undoubtedly the same: and they have also, what men have not, the power of extending the evils they feel or suffer through every

part of domestic existence, and poisoning life at its very root.

The destiny of women in all civilized society is of the utmost importance to man. Of what importance then is it that they should be prepared for the part they are to support in it—a part of the most awful consequence to the fates of empires, to the interests of society, and, above all, to the peaceful felicities of domestic life: yes—let me not be thought to make a false climax when I speak of the felicities of domestic life as last and highest in the scale of human existence—they are highest. The eternal analogies of nature stand unshaken and unaltered—empires and rulers *may* pass away—*have* passed away before our eyes, like a dream when one awaketh—the mighty ones of the earth have changed their places like the colours of the rainbow in a stormy sky—the earth hath been moved out of her place

—yet still and for ever the domestic charities of life exist, are cherished, are indispensable, not only to the being, but to the comfort of man. While sovereigns and sceptres change like the changes of the clouds, the blessed relations of domestic life, the relations of husband and wife, and son and daughter, continue, and must continue, like the light of heaven, above and undisturbed by all.

When we look into the early books of the Bible, those books which, in despite of the presumption of modern philosophy, contain all the knowledge we can ever arrive at about the creation of the world and the destiny of man, we find indeed an awful sentence denounced against woman—a sentence which is fulfilling at this day, and will be to the end of the world. But man need not be proud; against him also there is a sentence denounced, that in the sweat of his brow he shall eat his bread. Both sentences are fulfilling and fulfilled in

every part of the globe. Man must toil, and woman must suffer; such is the destiny of human beings—gloomy and awful indeed! When we turn to the Gospel, a brighter page opens; there temporal sufferings and temporal struggles disappear in the glorious prospect of an eternity. Eternity!—Oh, that the word was as familiar to your souls as it is to your ears! To the ears of women, at least, that sound ought to be welcome. Christianity has done for them that which neither their nature, their habits, the constitutions of society, nor the laws of all the legislators of Europe could do for them. Christianity alone has elevated woman to her true dignity in existence. *Let woman repay her vast debt to Christianity.* To estimate what she owes, let us view the situation of women in any part of the globe where Christianity does not exist. Wherever it does not exist, woman is degraded; wherever Christianity does exist, woman

is exalted. In youth we are shown what are called the illustrious examples of classical eminence. Miserable eminence! One of the best of their writers pronounced the first female character of antiquity intolerable from her pride and presumption. I have no wish to struggle against the invincible prejudice about classical characters here—the prejudice about Roman matrons and Grecian heroines—they appear to me only sublime savages—persons who, by the energy of their minds, rose above their miserable fate, but were not the less miserable ultimately. Human happiness, depending so much as it does always on women, on those who bore us, and on those we love, appears to me never to have attained its true level, its moral average, till the religion of Christ was known. Till then women were slaves or toys, victims of a passion too gross to be named from this place: or, rising above it, they rose into examples of monstrous

and exaggerated greatness—fierce and unfeminine — unsexed and unnatural: they were women who could bid their sons go out, and return on their shields—they were like Agrippina, bearing in her bosom the urn of one husband, and soliciting another, in the first year of her widowhood *. It is horrible to look back on the page of history:—on the page of life, it is horrible to see how women have been treated: it is horrible to the philosopher, or the religionist; but oh! that it was useful to women—that they could see that their only dignity was derived from that which is above—that their true beauty was the "beauty of holiness!" Where is she to discover the true estimate, the real utility and dignity of her character and of her sex? Let her be instructed. Among savages she is a slave: the miserable mother there is often known to strangle her female in-

* Vide Tacitus.

fant, and to call the deed merciful—and perhaps it is so—among such beings, woman is a beast of burthen, and less honoured in proportion as her strength is less than that of ordinary animals. And is this the lot of woman—of that elegant and feeble being, whose infirmities are her graces, whose dependence on man appears her most attractive virtue?—It is. Such is the destiny of woman, when human necessity organizes it: when human passion merely organizes it, it is worse, if possible—yes, worse—better be the manure scattered over the soil, and trodden down to fertilize it, than the rose that is torn and wasted in wantonness, and given to the winds to waft its perished leaves over the burning desert of desire and annihilation. Yes, such is the fate of woman in countries where all the attention of man is given to their own indulgence—where woman, a dazzling victim, is arrayed and instructed in all that can

dazzle the senses, and then led, a lovely, intoxicated victim, to the altar of sensuality, and sacrificed for ever. On the history of such nations, a mind that reflects will pause, and say to itself, where woman is thus degraded, man is a brute: —and it is true—awfully true. Women avenge themselves on man—if we make them slaves, we are slaves ourselves—we may bind them with chains, but the "iron enters into our own souls"—if we bruise their heads, they bruise us, and mortally too. Thus we see women in some countries the slave of necessity, in others the slave of appetite. Where alone do we behold her free, honoured, and beloved? Only where the religion of Christ is known. Ay, and in such direct proportion to each other are the religion of the Gospel and the emancipation of the female sex, that their liberty is precisely varied according as the light of that religion is more or less obscure in the various countries of Europe. The

women in the south of Europe are scarce better than their neighbours of the haram. It is indeed amazing, that, even in the wildest regions of the earth, where religion and civilization are alike unknown, the importance of woman should not have forced itself upon man. Viewed in a public, a social, or a private aspect, her character is inestimably important. In public, the fate of empires, connected as it must be with legality of succession, depends solely on the purity of the female character: of what value must that be, the failure of which might convulse half Europe, and plunge its nations in war and blood for centuries? If viewed in a social light, the character of females, if less momentous, is still more attractive: Who are they who are at the head of almost all the real good done in society? Who are they, who, even in this deserted country, move the great springs of every national institution that has been formed for the benefit or the relief

of their fellow-creatures? Women. Who, rejecting the fastidiousness of rank and the blandishments of pleasure, visit the school and the hospital, and the hovel and the prison; become conversant with misery in all her forms, and are neither repelled nor disgusted by the most frightful? Women. Who are they that are ready to do every good word and work; who protect every weakness, and palliate every suffering, from the cry of the infant orphan to the wailing of dotage and decrepitude; who furnish instruction for the ignorant, refuge for the unprotected, and an asylum even for repentant vice? Who are they, who, in this metropolis, where every street is putrid with vice and wretchedness, have opened a thousand doors of mercy, and hover like presiding angels over those institutions which they have consecrated by their benevolence? They are women. Let us look from social to domestic life: such is the felicity of the female charac-

ter, that the closer it is inspected, the more advantageously it appears—like some fine piece of mosaic, whose minutest part is also its most exquisite. In domestic life, it is women on whom we are dependent for the first years of existence, and for all its future felicity: it is she who tends us in sickness, who soothes us in care, who consoles us in calamity, to whom the heart instinctively turns in the hour of suffering, and never turns in vain. With all our boasted strength, we lean for support on one weaker than ourselves; and we find it is she who, in the hour of adversity, like the women of old, who gave up their ornaments for the exigencies of the state, gracefully converts those accomplishments, which distinguished her in happier hours, into the means of procuring that her protector fails to procure. It is she who, alienated neither by misfortune, nor even vice, follows us to prison, adjusts the straw bed, earns the spare morsel she refuses to par-

take; but hides the tear that moistens it, lest it should seem to reproach the author of her sufferings. But why do I detain you with representations weak, defective, and unworthy the original? The portrait of woman has been drawn by a hand that leaves neither touch nor colour to be added to it. Look to the Bible—consider the history of Jesus Christ:—who ministered to him of their substance? Who followed him whithersoever he went? Who sat at his feet? Who wept there? Look at the history of his last hour—one companion betrays him, another denies him—of the rest "all forsook him and fled"—but woman was last at the cross, and woman was first at the sepulchre*. Yes—here behold the female character at its highest elevation, raised to the eminence, and displayed by the light of religion.

* It is a fact that this sermon was preached before a work of Mr. Barrett's appeared, in which, I have heard, there is the same expression.

Men may possess great qualities, and perform great actions, that are not consecrated by the blessed spirit of religion; but there can be nothing great in the female character that has not its foundation in religion. The strenuous and tumultuous destination of man allows and requires a certain spirit of roughness—a preparation for self-defence—a kind of latent hostility about him—but the natural flow and tendency of the female character is in the channel of goodness. Man, brought up for the field or the flood, the bar or the senate, must be armed with a spirit suited to the rough encounters he may meet with; but woman, from the hour of her birth, seems consecrated to the cultivation of whatsoever "things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely—if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," to "think on these things, and to do them."

In the commencement of this address, I tried to lay before you an ample, but,

I believe, a just view of those causes that affect the destiny of woman. I have showed that her happiness and dignity are vitally connected with the existence of religion; with that alone they rise and fall. Look where you will, from the poles to the tropics, women are savages or slaves, illiterate, despised, half unsexed or half unsouled. Where Christianity is professed, there, and there alone, she is treated with respect, with tenderness, or even with decency. If this be the truth, my countrywomen, what should be your language?—should you not exclaim, "What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that he hath done unto me?" The answer is ready—"suffer your children to come unto Christ, and forbid them not"—dedicate them unreservedly to him to whom they owe every thing in time and in futurity—"bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And how is this to be done?—Is it by a labori-

ous devotion to every superficial accomplishment—a systematical arrangement of trivial pursuits, so adjusted that it is impossible for reflection to force itself in between—a determined sacrifice to every thing that can frivolize and falsify the mind—a habit of life that makes folly its business, and pleasure its toil? If we can pause for a moment, and gaze on the highly-accomplished and highly-talented female of the present day, with a reference not to this world, but to the next—see her form fluttering in meretricious exposure—her whole appearance calculated to draw off all appeal from the mind, and fix it in the senses—her whole soul concentred in the attempt, not to prove herself qualified to be the partner of a man of worth and sense, but the temporary idol of a being frivolous as herself, but who, weak as he is, can ridicule—ay, and bitterly and grossly expose the weakness of a woman who thinks to charm him by a display

which, in the females of his own family, or any female for whom he had a value, or even a respect, would disgust and revolt him. Stand apart from such an one for a moment, and ask yourselves—is this a being "for whom Christ died?"—has she an immortal soul?—will she be "judged for every idle word?"—is she, with all her cultivated intellect, ignorant of the God who made, and who will judge her? What time, what power, what wish for reflection, can such a being have? Yet there is a book where it is written, "Tremble ye women that are at ease:" and she says that she believes that book, and she calls herself a Christian. Monstrous and irreconcilable contradiction! —we cannot serve God and Mammon.

In speaking of education from this place, it is impossible to lay down rules —it is useless, and pedantic, and unprofitable. Better to try to infuse that spirit without which no rules can profit, and which can suggest rules for itself.

One mode, and only one, of inspiring that spirit, occurs to me as universally practicable. It is this: let every mother pay back the vast debt she owes to Christ, by instructing her daughter early in his Gospel—by making the knowledge of the Bible the basis of all education, and making it the cupola too—the alpha and omega—the first and last. I know this will be incompatible with the general habits and spirit of the world:—well, let her choose this day whom she will serve. If the Baal of Fashion be God—worship him: but if the Lord be God—worship him. Oh! that with one who chose wisely, you would answer,—"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Put the Bible early into your daughter's hands; charge her never to let go her hold of its pages: she will find there a corrective of all the evils of life—a solace under its inflictions—a faithful, stern detector of its lying vanities. Nay, it will be a test of your own sincerity in

this matter—it will be a sword to pierce through your own soul, should you deal deceitfully with hers. You cannot—no, you cannot, after charging her to receive as the oracles of God that book which teaches, that the adorning of women should not be "the outward adorning of plaiting of hair, and of putting on apparel"—you cannot urge her to the excesses of fashionable indecency. You cannot, after reading to her, or with her, that passage where men are enjoined to treat the "elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity;" you cannot seek to reconcile her to the unhallowed laxity of modern freedom, as opposite to the respect due to women, as to the honour due to God. You cannot—no, you cannot point her with one hand to eternal life, and with the other drag her to perdition. No, the world will make you renounce the Bible, or the Bible will make you renounce the world. She, she to whose beloved memory I dedicate

this address—she, too, possessed acquirements and talents, and eminently excelled in that delightful one which tends most to the embellishment of society—but she used them with such sweet and chastised enjoyment—with a pleasure that rose purely from the pleasure of others, that the exercise of her acquirements seemed like the practice of a virtue—her very indulgences were duties. She spent not the precious ointment on herself—she broke it at her Saviour's feet, and the incense of her heart went up along with it.

I shall trespass on your patience no longer. In a multitude of words, as well as of books, there is weariness: were they my last—give the Bible to your children; charge them to read it—charge them to read it by *your example*—and, as the Lord liveth, their souls shall live.

Now to God, &c.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

ST. JOHN, iii. 16.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

It must be obvious, my brethren, to all who consider the religion of the Bible, and who have had leisure or learning to compare it with other systems, that it differs from them all in one most important respect. All other religions *profess*, more or less, to give us views of God, and of our relation to him, of the duties which we owe him in this life, and of the hopes that his promises afford us of hereafter. But the object of all is to do something which may *dignify man*, which may exalt him in his own eyes, and make him think more highly of himself than he ought to think. Christianity is the only known religion that exerts its influence

directly on the heart,—that tells us that God loves man, and that therefore man's first religious duty is to love God. Not only do we find this great difference, but another, which is a direct consequence of this. Other religions fail not only in the object which they propose to us, but in the means by which that object, such as it is, must be effected. It is utterly in vain to talk to us about the abstract qualities of the Deity; it will never affect our hearts, it will never influence our conduct. Men may go on preaching, and other men may go on listening for ages; but unless the religion that is preached to us affect us, and that deeply, we shall never be the better for it, though all the sublimity of the human mind was exhausted to paint a notion of the Deity, and all its eloquence was employed to describe the effect that such a notion should have on us. In one word, the difference between real Christianity and any other system is this, that

the latter tell us, in various languages, that God is to be *feared;* and Christianity, and that alone, teaches us that God is to be *loved.* In this comparison it might be easy, by quoting from antiquity, to shew how little the love of God entered into the conception of other systems. One instance may suffice. An ancient philosopher, and far from the worst of the set, stoutly maintained that *it was impossible to love God;* the fact is on record, and the truth is indisputable. In the words of our text he has met an ample refutation—"God so loved the world," &c. This then must be the religion, my brethren, that must be fittest for man. Our ears may be gratified by eloquent language, our feelings may be touched by pathetic description, our minds may be enlarged by lofty *themes;* but unless our hearts are affected, our religion is vain. Christianity alone affects the heart, and when that is truly, deeply stirred, our lives will be proportionably

influenced, and only then. The declaration made in our text is one of sovereign importance. Of whom is it declared that he loves us? Of Him whose power is omnipotence, whose nature is unalterable, whose love is everlasting. It must be obvious to us, on the most superficial view of life, that man was formed to cultivate an attachment with his fellow-creatures; and that without this, life is either a blank or a torment. We court the favor or the fondness of our fellow-creatures, from the first hour of life to the last—in infancy we cling to the nurse or the parent—in childhood we seek the friendship of our cotemporaries—in advancing youth we pursue the illusions of passions—in age, weary of that folly, we are satisfied with cultivating the ties of blood, and please ourselves with the thoughts of sinking to rest pillowed on the arms of those whose infant clasp we have folded in prayer, and soothed by

the consolations of those to whose infant tongues we have first taught the name of God, and the prayer in which his love has taught even children to hail him as their "Father who is in heaven."

Thus dependent are we always on the love of our species; and yet how valueless, hollow, and perishing is their love, compared to that with which God hath loved the world! Man's love is always selfish: they love us for what they get, or hope they may get, by us, for their passion, for their pride, for their interest, for their comfort—no matter for what, for *themselves always.* But God, the infinite God, for what can he love us, but for the infinite benignity of his nature? If ten thousand worlds of beings like us were created and annihilated in two successive moments, it could neither add to nor diminish his glory. He is infinitely happy in himself—he is infinitely glorious in his own perfections—if he deign to love us,

his love is disinterested—for to us he owes nothing, and from us what can he receive?

Again, the love of our fellow-creatures is temporal. However tender or fervent the ties we form here, whether the bonds of nature or passion hold us, we know that there is a hand approaching that must break them,—a hand whose touch nothing can resist. Parents must quit the fruit of their bodies, partners the beloved of their souls; whatever we take to have and to hold is dust in the hand that grasps it. Death stands by, a terrible witness to every mortal engagement, and decides on its termination at the moment we decide on its certainty. But there, where mortal love ends, and for ever, there the love of God begins: it begins in eternity, and never will end. *There*, on the very verge of that stage where all human relations leave us,—where wife and child cannot follow us, except by their tears,—there the love of God meets

us, and meets us, unlike theirs, never to part. Well may the dying Christian, at any period of existence, apply to himself the words of the Psalmist, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then God taketh me up!" He does indeed take us up where those who love us best must leave us, and where we must part with them.

Lastly, human love is mutable, founded on circumstances; it will change with those circumstances, whose change is incessant and proverbial. Those who love us for their own pleasure, will fly the moment their degrading motive is suspended, and it may be suspended within the hour. Those who love us for their interest will fly perhaps still sooner. All is mutability in human attachments; disease, misfortune, accident *may*,—time certainly *will*, cool the warmest heart, and make what we lean on for support through life feel like the reed beneath the touch,—we trust to it, and it bends. But this, my

brethren, cannot be the case with the love of God: in life passion may betray us; nature may fail us, man may desert us,—*man will*, but God *will not*. With him is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." It is his gracious declaration, that he hath so loved — and he "cannot lie, and will not repent:" "God is not a man, that he should repent."

Many more differences occur between the love of God to us, and that which our fellow-creatures may bear. Many may love us, and want the power to shew it. The cold "God help you!" that we give to sufferings which we do not feel, and do not mean to relieve —and the warm "I wish I could help you,"—are equally ineffectual. They express something, no doubt, but they produce nothing; and they are probably those who wish us best, who can, by the necessities of life, do least for us. But this can never be the case with Him in whose hands the earth and all its crea-

tures are as "the dust in the balance, or the drop in the bucket,"—who can give and who can "let him,"—who cannot want the power and does not want the will to bless us,—and who will withhold from his people no "manner of thing that is good." Our fellow-creatures may love us to our injury; and the expression of the best feelings of our nature may be so perverted by prejudice, error, and accident, as to have upon us all the effects of the very worst. Affection may impel some to treat us with injudicious and importunate severity, and thus alienate the confidence it would have conciliated, and aggravate and confirm the faults it would remove. Affection still oftener prompts us to treat its objects with indiscriminate indulgence; flattering their passions, palliating their errors, and exaggerating their characters—and the most deadly hatred could scarcely give a more deadly proof of its enmity than this. But the love of God,

which has solely our good for its beneficent object, can never mislead us, or dishonour Him. Secured by the immensity of his infinite perfections, no error can shade his vision, no cloud can intercept or distort the rays of descending mercy. He cannot err, and will not deceive. Thus infinitely glorious in its nature, extent, and operations, is that attribute of the divine character of which our text speaks. It has infinite power to display it, infinite beneficence to direct it;—the soul is its object, and eternity the limit of its action.

If it were possible, my brethren, that any thing could more highly exalt the great God than his expression of love to his creatures, it would be the consideration of the state of those who are its objects. "Ye love them that love you," saith Christ. Not always is it even thus in life; but it is at least certain that few waste their affections long on beings who return it with indifference, and still fewer

on those who reject it with scorn and hatred. On the contrary, all the restraints of law, all the forms of society, and all the influence of religion, are insufficient to restrain men from giving a deadly expression of their hatred to their enemies. Here, then, as the apostle exclaims, here behold we the love of God! "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet *sinners* Christ died for the ungodly." "His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways." It is of his "mercy that we are not consumed;" and how is that mercy magnified, when he reveals to us —not wrath for our offences, but love— love to a world of guilty sinners, dead in trespasses, adverse to his holy nature, and hostile to his righteous will. In contemplating the scheme of redemption, we seem to be perpetually ascending a graduated scale of divine mercy, and each step raises us higher in our conception of the divine munificence. That his mercy

might be exalted by the dignity of the messenger, that messenger was his Son; his Son—one with the Father in ineffable union,—partaker of a "glory which he had with him before the world was."

Had the mercy of the Deity been confined to sending his Son to reveal to man his being, to teach him his will, to give him a rule of life, and a hope of futurity, —how inestimable had even this been! But Christ came on earth, not merely to teach the will of God, but to do and suffer it, that he might be an "example that we should follow his steps." He came on earth, not merely to reveal the being of a God, but to teach us the most interesting and important of all his attributes,—that he has not only created and preserves us, but that he loves us,—an attribute, without which (I speak it with reverence) all his other attributes would be ministers of terror. He came, not only to proclaim the law of God, but, in the language of the prophet, to "mag-

nify and make it honourable by his obedience unto death;"—not only to proclaim his mercy, as an abstract quality, but to prove its existence in his own person, by becoming the channel through which it flows to all the fallen sons of men;—not only to announce a way of reconciliation with God, but to be himself that "way, and the truth, and the life," except by which "no man cometh to the Father;" and by which, "whosoever cometh, he will in no wise cast out." Was there any other proof of divine mercy to be demanded on the part of man, or accorded on that of the Deity? There was one more, whose height and depth we never shall be able to comprehend on this side the grave, and which angels, we are told, in vain "desire to look into." Blessed, blessed will that hour be when we shall see him "face to face,"—"when we shall know even as we are known,"—when we shall be able to "comprehend, with all saints, the love of Christ, which passeth

knowledge." Here we can but faintly comprehend the affecting allusion in which it is expressed. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for the brethren;" and Christ, by his death, hath secured to his people all those blessings of which it was the purchase; and, by his rising from the dead, hath brought life and immortality to light, and "begotten us again to a lively hope" —"a good hope through grace"—the only hope that "maketh not ashamed."

Brethren, if these things be so, what manner of men ought we to be? Well does the apostle John conclude a similar display of the divine mercy,—if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. It is true, we feel, and must feel, till the last moment of our mortal pilgrimage, the wants, the weaknesses, and the sufferings of mortality. It is true, that, often sorely pressed, and well nigh overwhelmed with these, we seek deliverance from them as the

first object of our hopes and prayers. The cry of human nature every where is, Relieve us from our temporal sufferings, and we can well be content to dispense with hopes that point to future and invisible things. Alas! this is the prayer of insanity. It is quite certain that all the temporal blessings on earth could not inspire us with one hope of futurity; but it is gloriously certain that *that* hope will enable us to sustain every evil of life, not only with patience, but with gratitude. Those apparent ministers of wrath, when beheld by the eye of faith, are but ministers of mercy. The storm that shakes our dwellings, the disease that racks the frame, the anguish that breaks our hearts, are wholesome and holy monitors, whose voice speaks to us audibly, "Up, this is not your rest; God hath destined you for eternity; it is his will that you should know that "in his presence alone is fulness of joy, and at his right hand pleasure for ever-

more." Ye have hewed out broken cisterns for yourselves; quit them—they afford not a drop of water. Return to the fountain ye have forsaken,—the fountain of living waters." Such is their language; and shall we refuse to hear it? God knows, and we all feel, how much, too much, we love this world, with all its privations, vicissitudes, and miseries. How desperate, then, would be our state, if we had nothing that warns us we are grasping sand, and forces us to quit our foolish hold. God hath called us to a better destiny; he hath prepared for us a better country. Let us yield ourselves to him who loves us, and knows what we need better than we do ourselves. Let us humbly, patiently, and believingly wait on him in his appointed ways,—in prayer,—in study of the Scriptures,—in every good word and work; and "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Now to God, &c.

ON THE NEW CREATION.

2 CORINTHIANS, v. 17.

If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature.

If immutability be an essential character of truth—if it be a still stronger to preserve that immutability, while every object around is changing—if it be a stronger still, to preserve it amid opposition and contrariety, the Scriptures possess this character. Amid the incessant varieties of opinion that confound and distract mankind, they speak the same uninterrupted language to all that will listen to them.

Man, since his fall, a capricious, unstable creature, delights in variety; and whatever he forms for his own use or pleasure, will partake of the character of its author. Hence we see, that even the religious of the world are perpetually

new-modelling their doctrines, new-framing their rules, and new-making their creeds. Nay, some of them, as is well known, pride themselves on the facility with which they adapt them to the variations of mankind; on the skill with which they seize on the fashions of the day in literature, or philosophy, and erect them into principles of accommodation for their religion; on the address with which they teach their divinity to bend to the passions of men, since it cannot subdue them. In opposition to all this, the Gospel presents to those who contemplate it the same stubborn and incorrigible unity of character. It sanctifies the vices of no age; it respects the errors of no period; it compromises for no prejudices, let them belong to names of ever such authority among men. To all it speaks in the simplicity, the purity, and the permanency of truth. In the words which I have just read to you, it declares absolute

war against the religion of thousands—of thousands whose religion is merely that traditionary religion which is acquired in infancy by the instructions of the menial, or the mere force of repetition, and carelessly kept, without examination or enlargement;—who are content to practise the forms of religion because their forefathers did so, and to observe all the decencies of life, because they contribute to that good estimation; who, in a word, pass through life alike without crimes and virtues, and resign it without either hope or fear,—satisfied to have done no worse than they see most around them doing, and resting their claim in the divine sight rather on negative than positive qualities; probably claiming exemption from the penalties of the divine law, because they have never committed what actually rendered them worthy of the scourge of the human.

When I noticed the prevailing character of the Gospel, its opposition to

popular errors, I wished to apply it to those of this day. The prevailing fashion of our day in religion appears a kind of determination to bring Christianity down to the level of natural religion—to regard the Bible as a book that teaches just what may be found in the writings of the wise and good of all times, periods, and places—to look on Moses and Christ, and Confucius and Socrates, as all speaking the same language, and not one of them saying more than the other—to find in the truths it reveals nothing more than the doctrines of the existence of a Deity, and a future state—doctrines which, if they were not contained in Scripture, might be found in the book of nature, or any other book—Every thing above or beside this, men ascribe to the difficulty of understanding the sacred text, the mistakes of divines, or even the prejudices of the sacred writers. And in its new and peculiar code, which is intended for the government of the disciples of

Christ, they are determined to discover nothing more than those general rules by which the more regular and respectable part of the world have for the most part agreed to direct their conduct.

Such is the system of this day; a system to which, as I conceive, the passage in our text stands in direct opposition; a passage which it is but necessary to read, in order to discover the difference between the religion of the Bible, and the religions that are prevailing in the world even under its name—the marked difference between the sentiments that man would entertain, and the truths that are revealed from above—between those rules by which the world would govern their conduct, and that walk and conversation which the Deity pronounces to be well-pleasing in his sight. Whatever occasional amendment man might admit was requisite, no man would discover that he required to become a new creature; and,

therefore, if this be *revelation*, if it be divine truth, it is a proof to us that divine truth is not, as is usually supposed, a confirmation of that which we had before discovered ourselves, but a discovery of that which was totally unknown,—of that which we could never have otherwise known, and yet was most important to be learned.

And, viewed in this light, how unspeakable are our obligations to revelation, and to its Divine Author, who gratuitously, unasked, and undeserved, bestowed upon his creatures that which was thus important to them to possess; while on their part there was neither desert to claim, nor power to obtain it!

In this light, my fellow-sinners, may divine power grant you to behold it! In this light truly it appears the apostles beheld it: they call the whole system by the comprehensive name of Grace—the glorious Gospel of the Grace of God; and they magnify its glory, not on the

ground of its being accorded to creatures who had done so much as to entitle themselves to higher privileges, and were therefore raised to them—who, faithfully and diligently following the light they possessed, were indulged with a more rich and luminous effusion of it: —no—but to guilty creatures, creatures who had fallen from and forfeited their privileges; creatures who were in darkness and the shadow of spiritual death, when God, who called the light out of darkness, "shined into their hearts," displaying that free mercy, that grace, that unmingled and unqualified love, alike beyond our conceptions and our deserts.

Let me call your attention more particularly to the language of our text: "If any man be in," &c. Here we are told of a great change taking place in man; we are told of the circumstance which caused that change, and we are instructed who are the objects of it. But

here let me observe, that while our text insists upon a change being wrought in man, as a proof that he is really a subject of divine grace, it is also highly probable that many changes may and do take place in men, that are in nowise of the nature of that we speak of. And it is the more necessary to mark the character of those changes that so often occur in the natural character, that we may be assisted to discover whether, in this most important point, we are under the influence of the delusions of a false religion; or whether the change that has taken place in us be really the result of divine power, the work of his Spirit, and suitable to the testimony of his Word. A change may take place in our opinions, or our habits—we may become "new creatures" in our sentiments and in our conduct—and when we look round the world, we see many instances of such, which we are not authorised to ascribe to divine power. There is a period at which most

men become weary of the pursuits, and disgusted with the follies of life; at which they feel intemperance has poisoned their health, profusion has impoverished their circumstances, vice has impaired their reputation, and obstructed their path to worldly advancement. Nay, even supposing their external conduct to have been inoffensive, there is a period of life coming to every man, in which he will feel the want of some religion, to stand in the place of that bustle and toil which he has no longer spirits or strength for; something to interest those passions that are almost worn out in the service of the world;—a period to which he feels religion to be a thing suitable, as dissipation was to youth, or worldly care to maturer age: perhaps his conscience will join the alarm, with the startling testimony, that religion will not be always neglected with impunity. He resolves, therefore, on reformation. His passions take the part of his new resolution; avarice suggests the ad-

vantage of retrenched expenses, and pride promises the increase of worldly good estimation. Can you not conceive such an one abstaining from vices to which he has no longer a temptation, and adding to his conduct many things that bear the semblance and reputation of virtues? Can you not conceive such an one adding to a regular course of conduct a certain portion of external religion, frequent attendance on places of public worship, sobriety of manner when there, and respectful language of religion? Can you not conceive him so far becoming a new creature, that while the change that has taken place in him has not been that of which the apostle speaks, "the putting off the old man," but assuming the guise of the new man, over the unaltered realities of the old, his friends would hardly recognise in him the sarcastic scoffer, or the laughing libertine, while the cause of this boasted change is—what? Not the conquest of his vices and passions,

but those very passions and vices adopting a new direction, and assuming a new name; vested perhaps in the "clothing of sheep, but inwardly ravening wolves." A similar change may indeed take place under circumstances more awful. A man, destitute of the divine power of religion, may so long have been conversant with those who speak its language; he may have become so closely connected by some natural tie with its professors, or in some way found his passions interested in a system of religious truth, that he may have eagerly adopted a mass of doctrines, and comprized his whole religion in unfolding, discussing, and defending them. Such a man may perhaps become zealous and able in the cause, skilful to confound the gainsayers; he may attain the name and character of a distinguished proficient in speculative religion; nay, he may actually have attained it; he may uphold the great truths of Scripture with force and fulness; he

may talk well of the corruption of human nature, and the necessity of divine power to renew it; but every word he utters is only aggravating his own condemnation.—Let us return to our text. It is declared that there is a change to be wrought in man equivalent to a new creation. Mark that expression well, brethren: it deserves that you should. Had man been a creature but partially depraved,—had he retained some propensities and properties spiritually good;—nay, supposing them actually extinguished, had he retained a desire for their revival, for the relumination of the slumbering spark of the divinity within, would this language have been addressed to him? Nay, surely not: it is easy to conceive what would have been employed in its place:—he would have been called on to excite his latent energies—to awaken his dormant good—to put forth strenuously the power that was in him—and, by partial and

progressive efforts, to have acquired that capacity for renewed strength that would shortly render him perfect in his moral exercise. Now, compare this with the life-inspiring language of the text;—that language describes not the easy return of a righteous creature to the paths of rectitude, which it was painful for him to quit,—not even the laborious but successful efforts of good unwillingly reduced to the bondage of evil;—nay, but the restoration of a guilty, miserable, fallen creature, to a state from which he had fallen, which he could not recover, and which he was alike unable and unwilling to recover,—restoring him by a free exercise of sovereign mercy—infusing into him a new principle of spiritual existence—enlightening his understanding, rectifying his will, elevating his affections, and purifying his heart—making him, in one word, a new creature. Yes, such is the language; and had man been less than a creature utterly

fallen, indisposed to all spiritual good, and dead as to spiritual existence, there would have been no necessity for this miracle of grace, this new creation.

Again let us return to those words, my friends; they are worthy of all acceptation. It is a new creation; intimating that not a single faculty or feeling of the old is employed in the operation—not a fragment of the old ruin is employed in the new pile: one is the spoil of fallen nature, the other the structure of renewing grace. What, will it be said, will not a vestige of the former nature—alas! there will—remain indeed through every period of mortal existence? but, so far as it appears, so far as the passions and vices of nature prevail, so far will the progress of the divine work be interrupted, so far will its evidences be destroyed, and its hopefulness cease.

Again, it is a creation. Yes, the work of Him who gives existence equally in

a natural and a moral sense; who, making man of the dust of the ground, and giving him senses, and faculties, and feelings, can give similar functions to him whom he makes a new creature in Christ Jesus—can give him eyes to behold the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Gospel of his Son,—ears to receive the great and precious promises of his Gospel,—a tongue to speak the praises of "Him who hath called him into his marvellous light,"—and feet to walk in the ways of his commandments with willingness and joy.

Lastly, let me call your attention to those who are the objects of this new creation. Are they a few, distinguished and selected from their fellow-creatures by their exalted rank, intellectual attainments, or eminent worth in the sight of the Deity, and invested with privileges which others are excluded from, and an excellence to the hope of which others must never aspire? Such is certainly the

language and expectation of the world. They love to graduate religion by a kind of distinction borrowed from society, or some other equally inapplicable. Thus they will admit that religion, to be sure, is an excellent thing, but that different degrees of it are to be possessed by different classes of life. Thus, those who are withdrawn from the pleasures and pursuits of life ought to have more of it than others;—the sick and the unhappy, having no other resources, cannot have too much of it. Clergymen ought to have a great deal more of it than laymen; while other persons, occupied by numerous avocations, may be allowed to feel the want of it less and less important, till at length, in some situations, it may be compounded for by a mere observance of established forms. Such is the language of the world! What is the language of Scripture? "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." *Any man!*—the mean—the illiterate

—the vilest sinner and the strictest religionist, if they are in Christ,—if they have become disciples of Christ,—they will all receive his lessons, all imbibe his spirit, all walk in his footsteps—will hold, all together, that vital principle which is the bond of their union, and the pledge of their progress—will all abound in those fruits of the Spirit which are the evidence of their gracious state—will become under the influence of that power which alone can new create man, and which can new create any man,—new creatures,—and hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.

Such is that new creation which takes place in all who are in Christ Jesus; and, if any man be in Christ Jesus, it will take place in him; "and they that are Christ's will crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof."

Now to God, &c.

CHARITY SERMON PREACHED FOR THE PARISH OF COOLOCK, IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF DUBLIN.

ST. MARK, xiv. 7.

For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good.

"THE thoughts of God are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways."—The great ends of Providence are frequently accomplished by means the most remote from those which human wisdom would adopt. The moral structure of creation seems framed to confound the pride and the sagacity of man. On examining it, we discover infirmity and evil in every thing under the sun; but let us not be discouraged—a closer examination, aided by the study of revelation, will enable us to discover, that of that evil the result will be "good;" and amid that infirmity will "strength

be made perfect." He who made the earth and its inhabitants made them all for the want and for the use of each other. The highest amongst us cannot say to the lowest, "I have no need of thee." The mendicant, squalid, ragged, and decrepit, that seems to putrefy in the path he infests, gives to every one that meets him a lesson or an opportunity of virtue, a call to humility, or an appeal to benevolence. The higher orders are called to look down from their eminence and bless *Him* "who made them to differ from others;" and the poor are required to look up to those whom *He* hath made the "ministers and stewards of his bounty." Try to behold life in this view —it is the best and fairest: so viewed, its inequalities are softened, and its darkness dispersed—"every valley is exalted, and every mountain and hill made low, *the crooked straight*, and the *rough places* plain."

The difference of ranks is only a sum-

mons to the exercise of different duties. Is there eminence? there is a privilege of beneficence. Is there lowliness? there is an obligation to gratitude. If there were no misery, there could be no mercy. It is to the extreme of physical wretchedness that we owe the most exquisite of luxuries,—the "luxury of doing good."

Blessed be he, who hath thus, when he permitted the existence of evil, made it also beneficial; hath turned our chastisements into blessings, made the storm fertilize the land it threatened with destruction, and, as before, in the garden of Eden, gave the promise of restoration in the same hour with the sentence of the fall. He has drawn us to each other and to himself, "with the cords of a man." He has made the human heart ache with precious and salutary bitterness; he has entwined our moral frame with nerves and fibres, whose sensibility is most acute, and often painfully so; but on whose sensibility, as on that of

our physical ones, depends not only much of our suffering, but all of our enjoyment; for who would wish himself deprived of the organs of sense, because they are often the seat of the most exquisite pain? who would pluck out a right eye to save himself from being exposed to the intrusion of an atom?

These are not the reveries of a theorist, the dreams of one who will sit at ease in his closet devising palliatives of misery, which life, nature, and his own heart, disclaim; there are instances of it too strong to be denied—instances of it in those very beings for whom I am to plead this day. There is a general complaint of the hard-heartedness of the poor—the lowest of the lower order are often pitiless to each other—the poor will diminish each other's scanty stock by stealth—the poor will deprive each other of food and raiment—ay, though they know it is the last morsel, or the last fragment of clothing, of which

they are bereaving their fellow-sufferer. It is because the poverty of the poor precludes them from the feeling or the exercise of mercy: they know of none poorer than themselves—they cannot *look lower* than their own station; there the wants of their nature are centered, and there its feelings are of necessity centered too. They are merciless and sordid, because they want the means, the possibility of being bountiful:—oh, let not those who possess those means assume their obduracy!—you have not their exemption, or their excuse. Yours is the privilege to share with your fellow-creatures the abundance lent to you,—yours is the privilege not merely to discharge the ordinary duties of beneyolence, but to gratify every local impulse, every indefinite touch of humanity. I repeat it to you not as a *monition*, but a *promise*—"ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good." Forget it not this day.

It is impossible to tell how the same truth may operate on various minds; but there are no passages in Scripture which strike me as more effectually setting the seal of divinity on the Gospel than those in which we are addressed in the language of life; and the facts which the experience of every hour forces on our hearts are impressed with tenfold energy from being made to minister to the most rich and luminous discoveries of revelation; even "the unsearchable riches of Christ." When we read them, we feel that our hearts are in the hands of Him who made them.

The injunctions of the religion of Christ are what the human heart would delight to perform unbidden. Its author hath not commanded us to macerate our bodies, or debilitate our minds, or extinguish the affections of our nature by an abject and unnatural superstition: he has bid us be what we should long to be—he has bid the outstretched hand

give liberally—he has bid the feeling heart luxuriate in sanctified benevolence; he has strengthened impulse into duty, and given to those feelings that are a reward unto themselves, a still richer and higher reward; he hath made his "yoke easy, and his burthen light." We feel that it is delightful to give, and he hath declared it is "more blessed to give than to receive." In obeying Christ's commands we feel like the mother of Moses, when she received the injunctions of Pharaoh's daughter to *nurse her own child.* How pleasant was the injunction —how cheerful the submission!

But while I try to represent the exercise of beneficence (as all have felt it) no less a duty than an enjoyment, God forbid I should include under that term the indiscriminate and unfeeling heedlessness that scatters its useless alms without a thought of the object or the end of charity. I stand here to-day not to supplicate merely for the relief of the

physical wants of these poor sufferers, to ask merely for that which you do not miss when given, and they hardly feel when bestowed—no, their claims are much higher, and—so is your responsibility.

I stand here to plead for their spiritual as well as for their temporal wants. I hardly know which are greater; your wealth alone is insufficient for them, they must have your instruction; *they must have your example.* They are a people who are "destroyed no less for the lack of knowledge" than of food.

The religion of Christ is the religion of the poor. The Gospel is the poor man's patrimony; it tells him his treasure—*his only treasure*—lieth not here: let us rejoice to take up this orphan, heir of futurity—this ward of humanity—to read to him his *Father's will*, and announce the high hopes and destination it reveals to him.

Religion is indispensable for the poor. The modes of this world may teach its

prosperous children to restrain the passions they cannot subdue, to conceal the vices they cannot indulge, and sometimes to assume the virtues they do not possess.

The poor have nothing of this—nothing to divest their vices of deformity, or their passions of outrage; nothing to enable them to compromise between principle and propriety, and to substitute the graces of life for its virtues.

Many, many thousands in civilized society, living in the soothing exchange of the softnesses of life, can stimulate their vapid spirits from day to day by a repetition of the heartless flatteries of the last, and glide smoothly through life without wanting or desiring to exchange the graces of the world for those of the Gospel. But the poor,—unflattered by pleasure, unsoothed by sense,—to whom the path of life brings forth only thorns and briars,—whose condition and climate are perpetual nakedness, exposed

to perpetual winter,—he requires to be told of the termination of his stormy path, to be reminded that angels waited to conduct the dying Lazarus to the bosom of beatitude. Religion is indispensable to the poor.

Is the proof of this demanded? the proof is within our own breasts. We are at "ease in our possessions," we slumber on the down of comfort; the blandishments of affluence, the elegancies of knowledge, and perhaps the influences of religion, have combined to soften our manners and our hearts.

And have *we* found life to be without a pang, or a care? Do *we* never repine at the conditions of humanity, or the dispensations of Providence? Is our content never interrupted by a murmur, our submission unbroken by a struggle?

Gracious Heaven! at the table so amply spread do we "eat and blaspheme the feeder," while we dare to wonder at the ingratitude of those to

whom we fling the crumbs that fall from it!

If such be the necessity of religion to the poor universally, what shall we say of its necessity to the poor of this country?

I am not about to delude you with paintings of artificial distress, got up to produce a paroxysm of artificial benevolence; I wish not to impose on you a conviction that I do not feel myself, or to bribe your feelings at the expense of your understandings and of truth.

The root of the wretchedness of the lower orders of this country is in their depravity, and the root of their depravity is for the most part in their ignorance; they are wicked because they are uncultivated, and they are uncultivated because they have been shamefully, abominably neglected; more neglected than the people of any civilized country under Heaven. Their passions and their vices are as much enemies to their tem-

poral comfort as filth, famine, and disease.

Reform their vices, and you remove more than half their miseries; give them instruction, patient, gentle, steady instruction, and you give them all things —give them the Bible, and you give them more than all. I believe there is no country in Europe where more money has been expended on the temporal relief of the poor, and more ineffectually: we have been draining a channel, we should have attempted to dry up the source; we have been wasting our strength in contending with *effects*, when we should have employed its whole energy in removing the *cause*.

Your money cannot satiate the rage of the drunkard,—your money cannot make the indolent work,—your money cannot convince of his folly the giddy wretch who listens to the frantic and wicked lies of the demagogue,—your

money cannot bribe to peace those fierce and horrid passions which have defaced the order of society, and made the aristocracy of this country tremble in their down and ermine.

Money can never do this; but what money never can do, *religion can.* "The cross once seen is death to every vice;" the Gospel will force the drunkard to "put away his wine;" it will teach the sluggard to be "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" it will teach "him that stole to steal no more, but rather to labour;" it will teach the disaffected murmurer against "the powers that be," to "be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake;" to eat his bread in quietness; "to fear God, and honour the King." In one word—and were it my last, I trust I would utter it with the same sincerity of conviction which I feel this moment—convert the people to "the right ways of

the Lord," and you save them, and you save yourselves.

These are things over which the wisdom and the experience of the country have slumbered too long—I would ask the most cool and careless amongst us, what *must* be the consequence of neglecting them; let him behold a country that presents the frightful picture of humanity in ruins; let him view a populace putrid while alive, and brutal though immortal; mad with the lust of lawless power, believing that your bounty is only a bribe or a snare; fierce from habitual misery, "having no hope, and without God in the world:" let him calculate the force of such a populace excited by passion and by want, and then let him estimate the value of that only power that can arrest and overcome that force—the power of religion—that, like the light from Heaven seen "in the way to Damascus," strikes the foe

to earth in the midst of his progress, and converting his fury into terror, extorts from him the trembling inquiry "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This is no picture drawn from or to the imagination: these are not things which our fathers have told us, as "done in their days, and in the old time before them." Have we not ourselves heard, and seen, and felt them? ay, the proudest and the most powerful in the land have been forced to feel them in terror if not in conviction.

And can this be called pleading for the poor? No, *I am pleading for you*—from yourselves I am demanding mercy *for* yourselves—you that are blessed with wealth, give, that ye may purchase its enjoyment in security—you that are in power, give, that your authority may be honoured and obeyed—you that would "live long and see good days," give, that ye may be enabled to sit every man under his vine, and his fig-tree, that ye

may no longer carve the household meal with the bayonet, and snatch your sleep in the fearful intervals of the alarum-bell. How long shall experience unite with conviction, and both press on our hearts in vain a testimony substantiated by the word of God himself, that, "it is righteousness that exalteth a people."

Let us be wise in our benevolence, so alone shall its exercise be beneficial to others, and blessed to ourselves. Bodily food is not enough for those who "hunger and thirst" for the word of everlasting life. They cannot "live by bread alone"—there is a famine in the land, worse than that of corn and wine, even "a famine of the word of the Lord." The wound of "the daughter of my people" is not to be healed, or scarfed over by the daring empiricism of moral or metaphysical experimentalists. Systems of education from which religion is excluded, dreams of indefinite hopes and unsanctioned virtues may amuse the

cold head of the speculator—they will not do for the people—with strong affections and simple faculties, they require plain positions and forcible claims. They require a present providence and a future retribution—a hope and a fear—a heaven and a hell. When they are acquainted with their Bible (the only book that can give man the knowledge of God or of himself), then, and not till then, the hearts hardened by misery and inflamed by hatred shall turn to you as the heart of one man. The hands that lately held a knife for your throats, and a torch for your dwellings, shall be lifted up in prayer for you to that God whom they before "ignorantly worshipped" with rites of blood, but whom you have "declared unto them" as the "God who maketh men to be of one mind in a house." They will abjure their Baal and his bloody priests; and their voice shall be heard to cry, like Israel's of old,

"the Lord he is God, the Lord he is God!"

Are these words too bold for the mouth of an humble and obscure individual? Remember the profession of that individual. Remember that a minister, by the duties of his function, is forced to a terrible familiarity with those parts of life that are shrouded from other eyes, by the curtains of the bed of suffering and of death. Man knows not man:—*you* hear your fellow-creatures talk the artificial language of society—*we* hear them talk the language of nature in her hour of extremity without disguise or concealment, when the sufferer, impatient even of the slight forms that precede the approach of a stranger—impatient of any thing that reminds him of this world, bursts almost on the entrance of the spiritual friend, into the question, "what must I do to be saved?".

Man knows not man:—you see

them in the tumults of business, or the disguises of ceremony—we see them in the nakedness of truth—we hear them "whisper to their pillow the secrets of their overcharged souls;" we see them in the hour of death—almost as in the day of judgment. When misery assails you in the streets, you bribe or drive it from you: when the mendicant persecutes you with his importunities, you think of him as one whose cry is painful, and whose cry you hasten to silence. He departs and is forgotten. But *we*, if summoned, must follow him to the airless hovel, the frozen hearth, and the rotting straw—*we* cannot shake him off, and "pass by on the other side"—*we* must listen to him—*we* must behold him—behold the form of misery in all its naked and revolting hideousness—we must give him, if we can, hope and consolation—horrible to tell—often we cannot. The poor of this country are strangers to the house of God: look to the aisles of

your churches, they prove the terrible truth,—the poor of this country are strangers to the word of God. In fifty cabins you will not meet a single Bible, and if you do, it is a book sealed—they know not how to read. In no country under Heaven is there a greater degree of mental and moral degradation. They are flung offals from day to day that keep the body from dying of famine, (nor always that) but their souls are left to perish. What can you expect such a people to be? *Just what they are.* And are *you* not answerable for this? Oh, put not the question from your hearts—remember there is a day coming when it will be asked again, and you *must* answer it. How—God only knoweth! My brethren, let me tell you of the death-bed of the poor; the death-bed of ignorance must be the death-bed of despair. We attempt to tell him of the power of religion—he has never heard its name. We attempt to make him utter in prayer

the name of that God which he has never heard but in execration—never uttered but to blaspheme. The ghastly stare—the struggle of terror and torpor that succeed—the terrible throes of conscience just coming to life as the body is leaving it—the departure of a human creature in the attempt to call upon his Maker for the first time, and *that time too late!*—Oh, that I could make you present in spirit at such a scene! thousands, thousands would the most sordid of you give, under the feelings of such a moment, to interpose between that creature and eternity, and transfer to your own dying hour the consolation of having saved his from despair. It is not too late—the objects are before you this day.

Be not weary, be not impatient, when I again urge on you the claims of their extreme wretchedness; when I again implore you to cast your eyes upon its living representation before you. The view of misery is very salutary. It must

be a hard heart it cannot touch—it must be a corrupt one it does not purify. Why should we shrink from it? Are we *too* apt to reflect on human suffering and on human frailty—on the fragility of earthly possessions, and the certainty only of their worthlessness and their loss? Are we *too* mindful of ourselves in the flush of health, too mistrustful amid the flatteries of prosperity? Do we touch our blessings with too timid a hand, or hold them with a too slight and unjealous grasp? Is not our very impatience of such lessons the strongest proof of our need of them? The view of human misery does indeed humble our pride, and awake our benevolence, and excite our apprehension of mortality—and does our pride require no chastisement? our benevolence no stimulant? our forgetfulness of mortality no awakening touch? But there is yet another cause, a deep, but a just one. Human misery is as indiscriminating as it is general. There is

a kind of deprecation, a solemn peace-offering in the tribute we pay to the wretchedness of others; like the patriarch of old, we snatch our child from the altar, and substitute an humbler offering in his place.

If any thing could be wanting to make your offering this day an offering of the heart, it is to be found in the peculiar circumstances of those who are its objects. They are not inmates of the metropolis, nor are they removed far from it. They are just near enough to be tantalized by its luxuries, and tempted by its vices,—to see multitudes of the middling classes in the enjoyment of comforts they want, and numbers of the higher basking in luxuries they must never know. They are precisely within the contagion of the vices of the city, and beyond the sphere of its comforts. In a situation so critical to their temporal and eternal welfare, shall I not earnestly call on you to save them—save them by

your bounty from the miseries, and by your example from the mischiefs to which they are exposed? You are formed, by your relative situation, to spread a shelter round them. Owing to the comparative fewness of inhabitants, and uniformity of life, there is a much closer connexion between the orders of society in the country than in the capital. In the streets of the great city, when tortured by the incessant howl of beggary, we relieve the object to relieve ourselves, and pass on, ignorant and heedless whether we hold a place in his memory or his prayers. But it is not so in the country; there is a knowledge of persons, a traditionary love of families, an intertexture of habits, and a power of example that cannot exist among the crowded and independent inhabitants of the metropolis. Among those who *know none but you*, your example must prevail, and your benevolence must be felt even in their "heart of hearts;" your

characters and your actions will dwell in their memories—you will live a traditionary life in the hearts of their children's children—what you have done for them will outlive the lives of those you have benefited and blessed—it will certainly outlive your own. They know you personally, *they will pray for you by name*—as the high priest bore the names of the tribes on his breast-plate when he entered into the holy of holies, so will they bear yours on their hearts when they enter into the presence of God.

In the city you are often mocked by imposture you cannot detect, and harassed by wretchedness you cannot relieve; in the country ye "have the poor with you always;" the real, suffering, helpless poor, and "whenever ye will, ye may do them good," and be sure it is good you are doing.

I am unwilling to believe that any native of this country can calmly set himself to oppose what I have ad-

vanced this day; still less can I think that such an individual is among this congregation. I have taken my topics of appeal from what every individual around us may and must see, and feel and know, "whether he will hear or whether he will forbear;" whether he will admit the conclusions his senses force upon him, or not.

Is this not a time for the rich and poor to hold by one another? Let me not be told of the hard-heartedness, the ingratitude, and the malignity of the poor! Much of it may be true; but, that it is so, is your reproach as well as theirs; they are men of like passions with yourselves, they have feelings to be conciliated, they have sufferings to be consoled and relieved, they have hearts to be won, and their hearts are worth winning—they *can* be excited by bounty, they *can* be melted by generosity. Let no man think that his vain reasoning, drawn from petty and limited localities, can give the lie

to the unalterable analogies of nature and Providence. Wherever man is on this side the grave, good may be done to him, and he must be the better for it—(at least his benefactors will); repeated bounty will be as coals of fire on his head, and the ore of the most stubborn must melt. *Try them this day.*

But I was to blame, perhaps, to address you from topics of expediency rather than of duty. On this day and from this spot, I should have addressed you, not as citizens or as men, but as Christians: "forgive me this wrong." In the spirit and place of my profession, then, I plead to you—in "the bowels and mercies of Jesus Christ" I adjure you—have mercy on your poor brethren.

I will address but a few words more on the objects of this charity—I know of no institution more comprehensive—few so beneficial.

This charity includes the poor of every age and of every description—it includes

the aged poor—those whose exhausted strength not even famine can compel to further exertion, who but for you must this day lie down and die—it includes those whom in the prime of life, and amid the struggles of industry, it has pleased God to smite with sore disease, to lay them wounded and half-dead in the mid-way, that the traveller as he journeys may see them, and not pass by on the other side—it includes children—Oh! what shall I say to impress on you your responsibility for these nurslings of Heaven; these little ones whom Christ calls to him, and calls on you to lead?

In the name of all this mass of complicated misery and infirmity I appeal to you—you, whom compassion has suspended for years over the couch of an aged relative whose very helplessness you loved—think what had been their fate if their grey hairs had been refused that relief which grey hairs are bowed down before you to supplicate this day.

You, who remember to have seen (and such sights are common), the father of a family smitten down in the midst of his toils and his hopes; oh, think of the sufferings of those whose despair is aggravated by famine, whose want of consolation is attended by want of bread. You who have children,—need I go on? I am answered by your hearts,—I am answered by your tears.

Confidently I call on you,—no man shall mock my vehemence,—it is a cause in which I do not deceive, and cannot be deceived; without fear or hesitation I intreat you to give liberally, to give abundantly. He in whose name and for whose sake you give is not "unrighteous, that He should forget your work and labour of love."

Now to God, &c.

ON SINCERITY IN RELIGION.

II. CORINTHIANS, i. part of the 12th verse:

For our rejoicing is this, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.

In these words, in which St. Paul avows the great qualification necessary for the Gospel ministry, he also intimates that this qualification is no less essential to the professors of Christianity than to its preachers; and that no man has a right to deem himself a Christian in spirit and in truth, unless he be possessed, in a degree, of that simplicity and godly sincerity which the apostle proclaims as the characteristic of his mission.

In this conclusion all will readily unite. Every one will allow that sincerity in religion is the first and last requisite—the alpha and omega—that without which

there is no religion, or worse—without which the religionist is an empty formalist, or a guilty hypocrite.

But while we all join in exalting the value of sincerity in religion, many overlook that the only thing which can give value to this sincerity is—that we are sincere in *true* religion. Many, either conceiving the virtue of sincerity to be of such value that it is no matter to what system it is applied, provided a man really possesses it; and many others, believing the difference between religious systems to be wholly immaterial, and that it is of little consequence what a man's creed is, provided he be sincere in its profession—many reasoning thus, establish an opinion, popular indeed in the world, and flattering its professors with a false imputation of liberality, but equally unfounded in reason, and unauthorized by Scripture. To suppose a man sincere in a false system, is only to suppose him lulled in insensibility, or hard-

ened in obstinacy; it is to suppose him placed almost beyond the reach of conviction, and consequently in a much more dangerous state than him whose doubts, by placing him within the reach of discussion, render his extrication from error more probable, and facilitate, at least, the human means of his conversion. Such is the value of truth, and especially of divine truth, that the man who is sincere in that will alone reap his reward in the attainment of security from danger, and the enjoyment of peace without disturbance.

Having thus pointed out the necessity of being sincere in the true religion alone, as that which will entitle us to its benefits, I proceed to inquire what are the evidences of that sincerity—how a man may know himself to be really in earnest in his spiritual concerns; an inquiry, God knows, of infinite importance, when, in the emphatic language of the prophet, multitudes persist through life in a course

of self-deception, and go down to the grave without ever demanding the question of their souls, "is there not a lie in my right hand?"

Of many evidences that might be adduced, I shall select four, that appear to me indispensable; and I beseech you, brethren, to mark them with no light attention, while a worm of the dust, like yourselves—who is, like all of you, accountable, and, like all of you, must shortly render up his account—proves your souls and his own with the solemn question, am I sincere in my religion?—The first thing that will enable us to answer in the affirmative is, that there is no compromising spirit in our religion; that we "render unto God the things that are God's," without, what I may call, the discount of the world; that we do not deliberately or wilfully suffer "one jot or tittle of the law to pass unfulfilled."

My brethren, this is a strong evidence of sincerity; and to prove that it is, if we

look to the world, we find it wholly wanting in it. Men, who are in their hearts slaves to the world, and yet unable wholly to throw off the yoke of conscience, generally contrive to reconcile both, by constructing a system of religion for themselves, that they believe will pacify the one, and enable them to retain their hold of the other—they contrive a religion consisting of external forms, decorous language, and perhaps outward regularity; but which has not the power to extort from them the sacrifice of one beloved lust, or establish in their hearts that principle of unreserved devotedness to God, which is the only source of true religion. Hence we see them every where, and at every period of life, compromising for the vices they will not sacrifice, and the passions they cannot subdue, by exterior conformity and mechanical religion; and while their ill-concerted system deprives them of all the real enjoyments and genuine blessedness of Christianity,

enough of its form and force are retained to render them uneasy in those indulgences it disturbs without banishing, and in the struggle to unite what cannot be united, the service of God and the service of the world. The enjoyments of the latter are rebuked, checked, and withered; and the attainments of the other rendered awfully precarious, if not absolutely hopeless. The sincerity of the Christian is evidenced by the absence of this compromising scheme. The entire service of God, the exclusive devotion to his spiritual interests, the conquest of every lust, the sacrifice of every passion—such is his object: his *object*, I say, because its attainment is not in all certain, nor in any perfect; but while he keeps this object steadily in view, while there is no conscious reserve of secret indulgence in the soul, no strong-hold of sin in the heart which holds out against divine power, while he feels that were the sacrifice of a right hand or a right eye required, it

should be made—so long a Christian has a comfortable evidence of the sincerity of his profession.

Another, and scarce an inferior proof, is perseverance. There are few individuals who have not at some period of life felt religious impressions, and yielded, in some degree, to religious influence on their practice—but there is no permanence in the religious course of an awful majority—they "endure but for a season, but in time of temptation fall away." There is not a libertine whom his vices have not sometimes terrified into partial reformation, whom his conscience has not lashed into an attempt to escape from its scourge. Nay, those whose consciences are not perhaps so terrific, nor can reproach them with excess or enormity—even they feel from time to time the necessity of amendment, and waste life in what are called good resolutions—partial efforts at reformation feebly commenced, heartlessly conducted, and hopelessly concluded;

and this is because such efforts commencing in nature must end in nature—that which is born of the flesh is flesh—imperfect and corrupt, they partake of the defects of the source from which they are derived, a soil that can bring no fruit to perfection. But the Christian—who can look up to "Him who hath begun a good work in him," and rest satisfied that he is able to accomplish it, and to "keep his people through his own power by faith unto salvation"—the Christian has a source of confidence and joy that the world cannot give, and the world cannot take away. Here, indeed, is the only security for perseverance in the service of God, and it is a security that never can and will be shaken. The Christian, with this confidence as his support, may rejoice in his perseverance in the service of God, as an evidence of his sincerity; and renewing that confidence by prayer and by faith, by the cultivation of every gracious and

holy affection, and the exercise of every good word and work, he will "go on from strength to strength, and unto the God of Gods appear at last in Sion."

Let me not be thought to trifle on this subject, nor diminish its importance by nugatory subtleties or shallow minuteness, when I add, that in my mind a strong evidence of sincerity in religion is, that it bears the test of solitude, and does not desert or upbraid us in the hour of lonely reflection. So universal are the workings of pride, prejudice, and error, that there is great need of distinguishing between the effects they produce on professors of religion, and the operation of very dissimilar causes, that end in producing the same effects. Thus, passion will produce zeal in religion, of which the outward evidences will be as intense and radiant as if the fire was kindled from heaven, and the seraph himself brought the coal from the altar—pride will produce perseverance in the

cause we have embraced—and a saint himself cannot be more steady in truth than the martyrs of error. And so of the rest—every passion and every vice may assume the disguise of an angel of light. But the system they defend, and the consequences they suggest, will not stand the test of solitude. The excitement of a crowded assembly, of an able antagonist, or the wish to display eloquence, and signalize talent, will lead a man far in the defence of topics to which he is in his heart and soul totally indifferent; but when he communes with his own heart, and in his chamber, what consolation will he derive from those applauded doctrines? Ah! my brethren; it is the truth that whispers peace to the heart, not that which ministers pride to the ear, that bears the evidence of sincerity. The doctrines, the principles, and the consequences, that stand the test of solitude and meditation, of loneliness and abstraction; that form the stay and comfort

of the heart in the darkness of midnight, the desertion of sickness, and the silence of the soul; these are they that establish a proof of their sincerity, triumphant to reason, and refreshing to the conscience.

But the last, the greatest, the indispensable proof of sincerity, that before which all others fade and shrink away, and without which, indeed, not one can be an admissible evidence, is the conformity of our lives to our principles. Other evidences may deceive us—but this never can: others may be misinterpreted—but this bears a superscription legible to men and angels; yea, current in the treasury of Heaven itself. My brethren, the eloquence of an angel, and the zeal of an apostle, if he reasoned with the force of Paul, and felt with the energy of John, could not bring such conviction of the sincerity of our religion, as a life corresponding to its dictates. If this exists, no other can be wanting—if this be defective, no other

can be substituted for it. To this the Scriptures refer—to this the apostles call us—this Christ himself erects, as at once the standard and the test of all sincerity. "Not they who say unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven," but those that do the will of his Father. To this test let us bring our lives and our consciences, and the former will be purified, and the latter enlightened. By studious and conscientious perusal of the Scriptures, by the effectual fervent prayer of faith, by a solemn vigilance, a godly jealousy over ourselves, in effecting a conformity between the truths we profess and the practice we exhibit, shall we be enabled to discover our sincerity; and God grant that the trial may justify our hopes, and establish our security! We cannot be mistaken either in the means or the end of our inquiries, if they are pursued with zeal, with seriousness; ay, if we are but in earnest in the pursuit. Oh! then, my brethren, wake—

wake to the inquiry,—the destination of an immortal soul, the interests of eternity hang on it;—and do ye yet pause, and do ye yet delay? Delay it no longer; press on your souls the tremendous question; urge it in silence and retirement; "commune with your heart, and in your chamber"—press it on yourselves with that solemnity that becomes beings who must one day answer it at the bar of God, in the presence of worlds, with that solemnity which becomes beings whose salvation waits on the answer, whose immortal destination trembles between the words yes or no. Oh! seek not to deceive yourselves; it is only yourselves that *can* be deceived: God cannot, nor even your fellow-creatures long: a deathbed may unmask the vain professor—eternity must. Seek not to deceive yourselves; you alone will be the sufferers by the deception, and none will be enriched but the enemy of souls. Miserable deception! when we strain all the powers of

a sophisticated mind to defraud ourselves of everlasting happiness. I do not speak of wilful, deliberate hypocrisy—the sin, I believe, of few—I speak of habitual self-deception—the sin, I fear, of millions—millions, who rise up and lie down under the dreadful illusion that they are sincere in the profession of the Gospel; while their actions, their habits, their tempers, and their language, are every hour setting its precepts and its spirit at defiance. Oh! let them err no longer: let them open their Bible; and, when they read one page of it, let them read another page of their own lives, and pronounce where is the conformity, where is the consistency? Where, then, is the sincerity? In that book, written by the finger of God, they will read, "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his"—And have we, then, that spirit? Its fruits are easily known—are they visible in our lives? In that book they will read that they that are Christ's

have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof." Have we done so? Let me not be misunderstood: perfection is the dream of the enthusiast, sincerity is the test of the Christian. The fanatic may think he has subdued all the evils of nature: the Christian will feel that he is aiming at the conquest—that he is, if not always a conqueror, at least always contending, and that he shall at last be triumphant, not in his own strength, but in that which is promised him from above, and which shall be given him. Oh! one such question, solemnly put, is sufficient to tear off the mask, which we varnish with such miserable art, and show us in the same moment what we are, and what we must be. Brethren, how shall we abide this examination? We must undergo it either in time or in eternity: we must "judge ourselves," or we must be "judged of the Lord." If, on the trial, our "hearts condemn us not, then have

we confidence towards God:" if they do —still there is hope—hope for the penitent—hope for him who humbles himself before God; and who, henceforth taking the word of everlasting life for his guide, and the careful and conscientious examination of his own for the proof of his sincerity, shall humbly and faithfully endeavour to produce that conformity between them which is the only test that will be admitted here or hereafter. If our pretensions are hollow, even here men will deride us—and the Son of God will deny us hereafter;—if you are sincere, the "root of the matter is in you"—the hope and the promise are yours. On, soldier and servant of Jesus Christ! the contest may be sharp, but the victory is certain.

Now to God, &c.

ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

ST. MATTHEW, v. 48.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

THE strongest attestation that can be given to the merit of any thing, is that which is derived from the praise of an adversary; for being involuntary, it must be sincere. And, perhaps, of all the eulogiums bestowed on Christianity, not the least valuable is that which it received from one of its bitterest enemies in the ancient world, a heathen; and one who employed no inconsiderable share of literature and talents in writing against Christianity. He vouches in favour of its consistency and unity of spirit and character, and pronounces it, even while he tries to prove it false*, the "most simple

* Simplex et absoluta.

and absolute" of all religions. Let it be added, that these epithets are far more emphatic in the language in which he wrote than in our own.

This is a praise which those who are better acquainted with it than he was will be inclined to give it in a much higher degree than he did. Those who take the Bible for their guide in religion (and woe to those who take any other!) will find the religion depicted there the most simple and intelligible that can be revealed to man. God seems, in his word, to speak to us with the voice, as well as "draw us with the cords of a man," and to say nothing that the most limited faculties cannot comprehend, and the feeblest powers, rightly exerted, cannot fulfil. That there are difficulties in the sacred writings none can deny; but they appear to me rather *critical* than *spiritual* difficulties, difficulties that may exercise the scholar, but not perplex the believer. Difficulties must arise where

allusions to distant periods and forgotten manners necessarily abound; but while these clouds hover, as it were, in the horizon of our view, not one of them rises to obstruct that light which the sun of righteousness sheds over the track of man's salvation. He that studies the plan of redemption, as delivered in Scripture, will find truths without obscurity, and precepts without confusion—he will find a system of doctrines which nothing but human error can darken, and a plan of life which nothing but the lusts and passions that oppose its plainness and its purity can affect to misunderstand, or presume to pervert. I do not know but it might be added, that a peculiar advantage attends these verbal difficulties, as we are led to explain them by studying more closely the accompanying or corresponding passages, and thus by our attention being enlarged from the text to the context, we obtain more copious stores of divine truth, and richer pearls

of celestial knowledge: a single truth is enlarged, and principles extended to consequences—thus Saul, who went to seek for an object comparatively inconsiderable, obtained a kingdom in the course of his wanderings. Of such a nature is the passage in our text, "Be ye perfect," &c. It is evident to the most shallow capacity that they cannot be understood literally, as they would then imply an object not only beyond the possibility of attainment, but even the ambition of hope.

The next sense that presents itself is—imitate the divine perfections as far as humanity is capable of such imitation; but this, though the popular sense, appears to me far from the true one. Our Lord seldom deals in general maxims—worldly wisdom is driven to have recourse to them, because knowledge of the human heart, or indeed of human life (except a very limited part of it) is denied to human wisdom: while he who made the heart delights, if I may say so, to insinuate in-

struction through its most complicated windings, and make conviction felt in its remotest recesses. The probable sense of the passage will best be learned from the context. In the preceding verses our Lord has been comparing our treatment of our fellow creatures in the intercourse of life, with that which both we and they experience from the divine Being; and he marks, as a peculiar character of the difference between them, the partiality observed on our side, and the impartiality on that of the Deity. No observation could more profoundly illustrate the divine character; for it is evident that whatever inequality there be in our conduct towards our fellow-creatures is the result of those passions and infirmities, from which the divine character is necessarily and eternally exempt. In remarking that we salute our brethren only, and love them who love us, our Lord has given us a just representation of the condition of life. Favours conferred with a hope

of return, kindness paid with a large discount for our pride or our interest, resentment excited by the impulse of passion, and punishment inflicted for the gratification of revenge; all these shew that man is the agent only of his passions, and must be content to seek his reward in the selfishness that has prompted and governed his actions. It is evident, that were we not the slaves of our passions, our conduct would be regulated by the wish to diffuse knowledge, to establish virtue, and to create the greatest possible sum of felicity in human life; and these characteristics we are justified in searching for in the divine government, and there we shall not be disappointed. He, whom our articles emphatically describe as a being without body, parts or passions, whose eye is over all his works, and whose object is the good of all his creatures—he is described, in his providential agency, as causing the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sending

rain on the just and the unjust, without any of those interruptions of infirmity that sometimes make us, punish in passion, and sometimes reward without judgment. Considered in reference then to the preceding passage, our text bears a most distinct and expressive meaning. Do you shew in your whole system of thought and action, that impartiality and consistency, that unity of conduct and singleness of view, that is not only an essential part of the divine character, but, through the influence of the divine Spirit, a practicable object of imitation to his creatures? And that this was the sense in which the passage is to be taken is evident, not only from its connexions, but from its very language. Our Lord does not utter it as a single and separate precept, he does not say, "be ye perfect," &c. but "be ye *therefore* perfect;" that is, in consequence of the truths contained, and the principles laid down in the preceding verses.

Viewing it in this light, let us inquire what branches of duty this precept contains, and we shall find it comprise two most essentially important. First, that we should be perfect; that is, perfectly consistent and impartial in embracing the truths of Christianity: and, secondly, in obeying its obligations. The necessity of the first will soon appear, when we consider how apt men are to embrace partial and imperfect views of divine truth; and when they do so, how just the suspicion is that they have not either a spiritual conviction of them, or a spiritual interest in them—that their "fear towards God has been taught by the precept of man," and the system they have adopted is no more connected with their eternal interests than a theory in politics, or a principle in philosophy.

Early instructions, peculiar habits of thinking, a certain course of study, and mere habitual associations with persons of particular creeds and sentiments in

religion, may all have a power, an effectual power to make us embrace a certain system of doctrine; and not only to embrace it, but to believe the profession of it indispensably connected with our spiritual interest; and, under this impression, to defend it with an eagerness, and contend for its diffusion with a zeal, that, from long indulgence, becomes at last real, till the favourite system becomes an essential part of our happiness, as well as a lofty but hollow ground of future hope. Such has been the case even where the most shocking delusions exist: such has been the case where men without delusion lay hold of a few favourite passages of Scripture, and out of them erect a dangerous and fallacious system; true, indeed, as far as it goes, but perfectly false with reference to the object and extent of the whole. Press such persons with passages that either strongly qualify or wholly contradict their favourite system, and they are either utterly ig-

norant of, or inattentive to them; or, if they read, read only that they may press them into the service of their darling dogmas, and desolate the regions of Scripture by this conscription of its most vital truths. To the man who studies the Scripture as the word of God, and the guide to everlasting life, the instruction of our text is invaluable. Be clear, consistent, and single-minded in your views—search not for texts, but for truths—not for parts, but for the whole—and, whatever offence may arise from doctrines humbling to your pride, mortifying to your corruptions, and hostile to long-established errors, be assured it is not by subduing them to your pre-conceived opinions, and measuring the wisdom of God by the errors of man, but by sitting as humble learners at the foot of the cross, and embracing the whole counsel of God, that we shall find the words spoken there to be "spirit and

life," and able to make us wise unto salvation.

But again; the Scriptures do not merely contain a series of abstract truths, which, however sublime and spiritual, have no hold on our affections, and no influence on our lives. Far from it: Christ was not only "a propitiation for sin, but an ensample that we should follow his steps" —we must not only show this clearness and consistency of view, this integrity of heart and feeling with regard to the truths we profess, but with regard to the practical obligations they enjoin, and without submission to which the most lofty profession is but "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." And here again, how does the unity of scriptural Christianity, the "simplicity which is in Christ Jesus," stand at variance with the mutilated systems of the world? The man, who either rejects the practical injunctions of Christianity, or, selecting some of them

that are assimilated to his habits, his interests, or his feelings, rejects the rest; that man,—let his creed be as orthodox as that of all the apostles together, let his attachment to it be as zealous as St. John's, and his defence of it as eloquent as St. Paul's,—"that man's religion is vain." The truth of a christian profession rests upon two immutable bases —to believe all that God has revealed, and to strive (in dependance on divine power) to obey all he has commanded. Here let me not be supposed to lay down rules above human attainment, rules at which the hearers exclaim, like the ancient Jews, "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" I know it is above human views and human efforts—I know it is not above divine power—I know that with man this is impossible—but I know also that "with God all things are possible." The perfection I speak of is not the romantic dream of the enthusiast, actual perfection; it is perfect sincerity

of intention, perfect singleness of mind; it is what Barnabas meant when he "exhorted them with firm purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord." Many defects and many interruptions will occur; the world will seduce, the flesh will corrupt, the devil will tempt, and our own hearts will deceive; but, through divine mercy, these lapses will awaken to fresh vigilance, excite our humility, and redouble our caution. The most affectionate child will sometimes fail in his duty to a beloved parent; but, even in the sullen moment of waywardness, the very sentiment at the bottom of his heart, that rebukes him, must tell him that he loves that parent still.

But how is this child-like spirit to be attained? Who shall teach, or who shall enable a "worm of the dust to be perfect," even in the restricted sense in which the word is employed? I know of but one means—the study of the Bible, of that book which reveals a

Saviour, whose "grace is sufficient for us," and whose "strength is made perfect in our weakness."

In that single name of "Saviour" is comprehended all that can be sought by the terrors of guilt and the weakness of mortality; all that the human heart can require as the solace of its grief, the repose of its care, and the expiation of its guilt. Christ is made unto his people "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Summoned to the task of taking up his cross, and following his Master, the Christian at first exclaims, "Who is weak, and am not I weak?" but, on reviewing the power of divine aid, he may joyfully add, "I can do all things; through Christ that strengtheneth me."

Let not the most guilty of us despair, let not the most wretched repine, let not the weakest mistrust:—When called to rely on his strength, and walk in dependance on his spirit, doubt becomes

presumption, and false humility a crime. "He is able to save unto the uttermost." Alas! if multitudes of sinners reject the gracious invitation—if, when he calls them to be perfect, they exclaim, like his disciples of yore, "This is a hard saying," and either sit down in hopeless dejection, or vainly struggle to establish a righteousness of their own, it is not because *His* "arm is shortened," or "His ear heavy" —it is because "they love darkness rather than light;" because divine truth (as a sound theologian once well expressed it) is too plain to be understood, and too gracious to be believed. Is there a crime beyond his power to pardon? Is there a vice or passion beyond his grace to subdue? Is there a devil he cannot cast out?—None. Divine power, united with divine benevolence, is equal to all things, and overcometh all things. Are we guilty?—there "is redemption through his blood." Are we crushed under the burden of calamities?—"he is

able to wipe away all tears." Are we harassed by worldly care?—his invitation is, "come unto me all, ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Come to him, then, reposing your sorrows on his mercy, and your sins on his atonement, knowing that with the temptation he cannot only make a way to escape, but with the injunction to duty can infuse the power to perform—that, when he enjoins us to "perfect holiness in the fear of God," his Spirit can aid us in the performance of his word, and in dependance on his aid.

Now to God, &c.

PREACHED ON THE FAST-DAY, FEB. 5, 1812.

ST. MATTHEW, x. 28.

Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.

We live in awful times: Our lot has been cast in a period to which the annals of history present, I believe, no parallel. It is written, that "when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, its inhabitants shall learn righteousness." May we derive this fruit from the dispensations we have been called on to witness, and it will be cheaply purchased, even at the expense of all our terrors and dangers, our struggles and sufferings—yet it is certainly awful to look around us, and see what *has been*, and feel *what is*, and think what *may be*. The tremendous struggle in which we have been engaged at various times with

almost all the powers of Europe, and always with their great enemy and ours, —our successes, our misfortunes, the loss of our greatest public characters,—*ours, and the world's*,—and the calamitous state of our good sovereign, render this our day the most awful that ever oppressed the human mind with the sense of evils felt or foreseen.

Under these circumstances—circumstances that might force the attention of the most shallow, and the feelings of the most insensible—we have been called on this day to prostrate ourselves before Almighty God; to implore his mercy for us and mankind (for the destiny of *all* is at stake with us); to acknowledge the justice that has humbled and scourged us with many inflictions; to confess and deplore those crimes, by means of which, both as a nation and as individuals, we are offensive in his sight; and to intreat Him, "in his wrath, to remember mercy" —"lest we be no more a nation."

And under such circumstances, what call was ever better timed? Admitting the existence of a God, admitting his providential agency, and our dependance on him, what can be more just, and natural, and necessary? Is it not our "reasonable service?" I leave it to your own hearts to answer. Yet, alas! my brethren, I feel, deeply feel, at this moment, that those *general* truths, so readily admitted, are of all others those the least acted on. If the great Searcher of hearts, if He, in whose presence we are, and whose eye is on us, whether we feel its power or not, were to make the thoughts of our hearts as plain to us as they are to himself,—if it were possible to imagine that he descended among us this moment to point out who are prostrate before him in bitterness of conviction and humiliation of repentance, how many would he find? That would be a question hard to answer; but it would be easy to tell

how many he would find thoughtless, or thinking only of themselves—how many whose personal attendance implies an interest in the solemn summons which their hearts and souls disavow—how many who regard this meeting as one of those political conventions at which decorum requires their appearance, and at which the presence of the body may be suffered to excuse the absence of the mind. Were I to adopt the awful language used on another occasion, might I not ask in this numerous assembly, are there fifty, or thirty, or ten, or five, who really have met to "worship God in spirit and in truth?" A less number would have saved the sinful city.

Bear with me, my friends, while I endeavour to point out to you the vast difference between the motives which really bring us here, and those which we profess, and often believe do bring us here. Doubtless there are *some* here who come truly to humble themselves before God,

and who feel themselves as sacredly and exclusively in his presence as if God and they were alone in the universe; but doubtless there are *many* here who come as to a place of public intercourse, as it were, "to hear or tell some new thing," who have never thought on, or sought for, or felt the want of that spirit which they ought to bring here, which, in truth, they ought to have every where, and without which their presence here is unavailing, and indeed their existence any where without purpose, and without value. And, oh! my brethren, while your fellow worm tries to bring home this searching appeal to your hearts, harden not those hearts against him; try to feel, if possible, what manner of men ye ought to be at this solemn moment: it is a solemn moment to you, to Europe, to the world, to posterity.

Before I proceed to urge on you an examination, of which you never can feel the importance deeply enough, let

me attempt to obviate, if it be necessary here, a general objection against addresses to the Deity, suggested by a particular emergency, and confined to its topics and its interests.

There are many who say, how absurd for worms of the dust to imagine their impotent and erring prayers can alter the eternal counsels of God, or work a change in the mind of Him, whose purposes are from everlasting! And they go on triumphantly to demand, what can supplication avail with Him, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning?" and whether we can hope that the destinies of empires, and the fate of revolutions, will be suspended on the breath of a few obscure individuals, assembled in a corner of that earth whose whole surface is shaken by the commotion they presume to deprecate. This objection, doubtless, has a show of reason—it is but a show—no objection against the word of God, and the essential and in-

dispensable duties of his creatures, can have more than a *show* in its favour. We do not presume to shake the everlasting counsels of the Almighty, or to change that, which, knowing no error, can know no change. We know that the "Lord is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent." But we know also that the will, which cannot be changed, may be adored in submission, and that such submission will prepare us best for its most awful inflictions; that mercy may be supplicated even when mercy is almost hopeless; and, even *then*, may be obtained—that judgment may be deprecated, even while impending; and, if inflicted, there is still a consolation in the thought that we have deprecated it in humility. They know little of the human heart, or of human life, who would interdict prayer. If it be true that there is a God, prayer to him must be the duty of man; and if it were not his duty, it would be his, de-

light, and his refuge, and his consolation. Nay, granting there was nothing in human life worth a prayer, the very immutability of the divine will binds us to its exercise. God has commanded us to pray: He has created us to "feel after and to find him." God has commanded us to pray, to open our hearts, with all their weaknesses, and all their wanderings, to *Him*. And he has also promised to answer us; not, indeed, according to our vain and fleshly expectations; but in that way that will most redound to his own glory, the fullest illustration of the divine perfections, and the ultimate benefit of all his creatures. Prayer, under the apprehension of peril, or the pressure of calamity, is almost an instinct of the soul; and to repress it is to outrage nature, and stifle conscience, as well as to oppose the dictates of reason and the precepts of revelation. The "fool, who saith in his heart there is no God," is wise compared to him who saith there is

a God, but I will neither acknowledge his justice, nor implore his mercy, nor deprecate his wrath, nor ask his forgiveness. It is observable, that our Lord, who seldom notices the events of this world, has twice, in infinite mercy, deigned to mark this spirit, which I am endeavouring to reprove, as the spirit of a people whom God hath cursed by giving up to the hardness of their hearts. He marks it in the instance of the primeval world: "so it was in the days of Noah; they eat, they drank, they married, they gave in marriage, till the flood came, and swept them all away." He marks it in the instance of the cities of the plain: they, too, were stupified in sin and security; but "the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, God rained fire and brimstone from Heaven upon them, and destroyed them." When the cup of a country's impieties and provocation is filled to the utmost, and ready to overflow, she holds it in an unconscious hand—drunk with

unbelief and sin, she sleeps her deadly sleep—her priests pray—her righteous plead and tremble—she is deaf to both: then the people of God go out from the midst of her—*Lot departs from Sodom;*—and that instant the fire of God's wrath descends, and abides on and burns within her, and "the smoke of her torment goes up for ever and ever."

My brethren, I leave this picture to be contemplated by those who know it is no sketch from fancy: the light of the revealed word is every where reflected in history. I address not those who come not here, and renounce all interest in the object of this meeting. I turn to examine those various motives that have brought different individuals to this place to-day, and to try which will bear to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. Of those who are assembled here, doubtless there are some, who, elated by the consideration that they are the proud and happy sons of the first country on

earth, and fixing their exulting eyes on her grandeur, her power, and her prosperity, regard this occasion as one that calls them to hear only an enumeration of their privileges and distinctions among the inhabitants of the earth, and to receive from the voice of the preacher the last blast of inflation to their national and individual pride.

God forbid that I should be insensible (or cease to urge others to be deeply sensible) of the blessings we enjoy as natives of the first, the freest, and the greatest country under heaven!—a nation blest above other nations beyond example or comparison;—my tongue could grow "wanton in her praise," were I to indulge myself. But, from this place, and on this day, I would implore those (whose better feelings, I trust, I share) to *spiritualize* those feelings, to reflect that our distinctions call on us, not for arrogance, but for gratitude, and that the best conclusion we

can draw from their review is, "if these things be so, what manner of men ought we to be?" Oh! there is too much talking of politics, and too little reference to the power and purposes of Him who "ruleth all things after the counsel of his own will," and who "stilleth the raging of the seas, and the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people."

It is melancholy to think that we study and harangue upon these events merely in the pride of political wisdom; when rightly studied they might make us "wise unto salvation." With feeble and microscopic ingenuity, we strain hard to trace the finger of man, where a more enlarged vision might enable us to discover and adore the mighty hand of God.

It was so, more than an hundred years past, when the victories of Louis XIV., or of Charles XII., filled "all the post-towns of Europe with one blast." And the wise of that day (as they were reckoned perhaps) talked, and read, and

wrote, till in their zeal for the fates of beings they had never seen, they forgot they had immortal souls themselves—souls of more value than worlds; and perhaps, after nicely adjusting the concerns of kingdoms in which they had no concern, and deciding on the destinies of millions whose destinies they could neither alter or improve, God said to them, "thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Recollect, you who busy yourself with fruitless and foolish officiousness in "matters that are too high for you," recollect, that by the course of *political nature*, by the unalterable analogies of Providence, that country which now hangs like a meteor in the hemisphere of Europe, must fall from her proud station, her glory gone, her light trodden out under the feet of those she lately dazzled. And will you waste the energies of an immortal spirit, and those precious treasures of time that should minister to eternity, in gazing

after a meteor whose beginning was delusion, and whose end shall be darkness? She *must* fall; the fuel that supplies her blaze is too scanty. There is a kind of wild and terrifying prodigality of victory about her—the means are disproportioned to the end—there is too much energy and too little effect—she has not been *good—she cannot long be great*—but this is no place for politics, and if it were, I profess I am quite "innocent of the knowledge" of them; though I verily believe the wisest politician is a fool who trusts for his knowledge to the Gazette instead of the Bible. I hasten to resume *its* language. In that language, I say, her hour will yet come—the hour when it shall be said, "Death is gone up into her palaces." Yet a little while, and the spoiler shall come,—bloody, treacherous, and heartless as he who now rules her,—he shall come in his wrath, the cup of trembling in his hand—that cup of which she has made the nations taste—he shall

hold it to her lip, and make her drain it to the dregs. She has been drunk with pride and with blood: another kind of intoxication awaits her, even that which is poured from the cup of astonishment and fury—the "cup of the Lord's right hand *."

And where shall we be then? Even at the bar of God, giving an account of the time and the energies we wasted on the trifles of earth, while "the powers of the world to come" were all at work for our salvation, and wrought in vain to win our attention for a moment.

Here let me not be mistaken. The Gospel does in no manner oblige us to an insensibility of public events, or of our public duties—those unalienable duties which belong to us as natives of the country that gave us birth, and subjects of the government that made that

* I am heartily glad, for the sake of France and of humanity, that this prediction, like most other political ones, was *not fulfilled*.

birth a blessing—duties, to whose fulfilment we should cling with heart and hand, while we have hearts to feel, or hands to lift. But while I say this, and say it from and with my whole soul, I will add, that the vain and bustling solicitude of worldly politicians savours of nothing but curiosity and idleness trying to forget their own insignificance by engaging in restless, unprofitable, and incessant debate.

Would that such were less wise unto "vain jangling!" Would that, instead of entangling themselves foolishly and fatally in the machinery of that vast system, whose motions they can neither retard nor accelerate, they would look up to the great hand, at whose touch every spring moves, and recognize and revere those "judgments that are far above, out of their sight!".

I turn to a very opposite class *. It

* Let it be remembered that this was preached to an Irish audience.

is said that the lawyers were glad when they heard that the Sadducees were put to silence—they knew not that their own time of refutation was soon to come. There are too many among us, who, from worldly disappointments, embittered tempers, or causes still worse for themselves and for their country, delight in the character and office of prophets of evil, and "yell out their syllables of dolour" in every street, at every table, and in every ear they can infest. I have heard many such, and heard them, I confess, without either sympathy or credit,—"they have mourned unto me, and I have not wept." Listen to such, and you will believe (to borrow their own language) that every thing is in a state of ruin:—our rulers are unskilful, our administration corrupt, our enterprises unsuccessful, (or, if not, they ought to have been so,) and our national character, interests, and very existence, in the last and lowest stage of

degradation and decay. One consolation is; that, according to these gratuitous mourners in our Israel, nothing can make matters worse than they are—tell them of a defeat, it was only what they foresaw—tell them of a victory, and they foresee *that* will lead to a defeat. Against all expostulation, conviction, or even fact, they have one unfailing resource—*whatever is, is wrong*. With truly miraculous and unhappy sagacity, they "hear the thunder before a cloud is visible, and feel the mine sprung before the train is laid." To such I would address myself in sterner language. I would tell them plainly, you do not believe what you say—you do not feel what you attempt to make others feel—if you did, I do not say you would talk differently, but I know you would act differently. The very place in which you utter your cries of hypocritical grief proves they do not come from your heart—the public ways, the places of popular

intercourse, the convivial circle, the festal board—are these the places that a man who believed his country's last hour was come would delight to frequent? Would such a one go about to diffuse alarm and aggravate distress—to terrify the "feeble-minded" and debilitate "the weak"—to snatch away the support of Aaron and Hur from the uplifted hands of the prophet, though his own life depended on their being upheld—to make the wheels of our chariot drive heavily, when he should lay his shoulders cheerfully to the load—to trouble the host, when he should show the lamp, and blow the trumpet, and shout "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"

You incessantly exclaim, the crimes of the country (by which you always mean the crimes of its rulers) are bringing down the vengeance of heaven on us! Have you ever reflected that God weighs the crimes of people as well as of princes? Have you reflected that the

root of national reformation must always be *set at home?* Have you *mended one?* Are you aware how much depends on example? Are you exercising one moral salutary influence on child, dependant, or domestic?

And are *you* men to talk of national reformation?—You know not what it means. For shame—go home—"commune with your own hearts and in your chamber, and be still." You *talk* of liberty. Hear the words of those, whose words I blush not to quote even from this place—men who clothed the truths of Scripture in the richest garb of poetry, and they were not ashamed of the guise—

"He is a freeman whom *the truth* makes free,
And all are slaves beside." COWPER.

Your character is well described by another:

"Licence they mean when they cry *liberty*,
(And bawl for freedom in their senseless mood),
For who loves *that must first be wise and good.*"
MILTON.

Even a heathen could inform you that the first requisite of an orator was to be a good man. I am inclined to believe, that, if our popular talkers were sifted in this sieve, our debates and committees would be marvellously thinned of speakers.

Oh! if you believed the evils you predict, instead of hovering like birds of prey amid the ruins, to croak, to brood, and to devour, you would with heart and hand toil to repair them, or stand in the breach yourselves. I address myself to those who come here under the influence of those motives which ordinarily lead the numbers who frequent our churches. There are multitudes in the world—there are many, perhaps, in this assembly—whose religion is the joint produce of decorum and habit—they have little religion of the head—they have no religion of the heart—they know not what it is to worship "in spirit and in truth." My friends, when you appear in this

place with sober demeanour, when you join in the service with outward devotion, and listen to the preacher with decent attention, you imagine you have acquitted yourselves of all claims which the religion of Christ has upon its professors. I believe you are awfully mistaken. You have not fulfilled, you have not even understood the duties of this day. God is not an earthly sovereign, that he should be deluded with the homage of the body. External demonstrations are, indeed, good, when they are the fruits and evidences of an inward and spiritual feeling; but without it they are an abomination before the Lord. Hear him by his prophet, speaking of a day like this—"Rend your hearts, and not your garments." Hear him by his Son, speaking of such as you—"Ye tithe mint, and cummin, and neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and truth; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

I have traced, I fear, with a faithful hand, portraits that are before my eyes every day: I shall attempt to sketch one that does not present itself so often.

The Christian, my brethren, is one who views earthly things, not with indifference, but with a lofty and well-placed preference of the things of the "world to come"—he views "things temporal" with a constant reference to "things eternal," and therefore he alone rightly understands or truly enjoys them. Is his country prosperous?—he hath "more gladness in his heart" than the bare increase "of her corn, and wine, and oil," could ever give him. Are the visitations of heaven, "fire, famine, and the sword," on her?—he is the man best prepared to bleed and to die for her—nor is the sacrifice less hallowed because the victim can give her his *prayers* while he gives her his life. He is at once her Moses and her Joshua—he can draw his sword, and wield it well in her battles; but he

can also lift up his hands for her on the mount of supplication, and it is then that "Israel shall prevail." Such men we have in our armies and in our fleets—men who, in the hour of battle, forget not there is a "God of battles"—who, in the moment of peril, remember that He "hath no delight in the strength of an horse, neither hath he pleasure in any man's swiftness;" but that the "Lord delighteth in them that fear him," and who have too much fear of *Him* to have any room in their hearts for the fear of man. Such men we have; and, while we have such, our armies and our fleets shall be (under God) invincible.

My friends, to which of those classes, whose characters I have attempted to sketch, would you wish to belong? I will not insult your reason or your feelings by affecting to doubt what answer you would make. Well, I know but one way for attaining that wish, and, blessed be God, it is a way alike open

to all. In the Gospel, which reveals the way of a sinner's acceptance with the eternal God, is found the way of banishing every fear, save that salutary and holy one, that fear, which, unlike all others, *dignifies* its subject—"the fear of God;"—what exalts even angels must be a glorious quality for men,—it is that alone which can teach us to "fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do," by substituting for it that "reverence and godly fear," whose object is "*Him* who can destroy both body and soul in hell."

When kings, and the kingdoms they have ruled, conquerors, and the countries they have desolated, shall be reduced together to the small dust of the balance,—yea, when the globe shall crumble in the ashes of the last fire,—*your souls shall live*:—the destinies of worlds are perishable, but *you* are immortal. Children of God, and heirs of eternity, know your own dignity—awake

to the importance of your "high calling:"—it is not the petty interests of time, not the fugitive localities of this or that handful of dust (crumbling under the foot which presses it), that are yours —you have an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled." Children of immortality, awake! Better to be roused by the voice of a worm of the dust, than be startled by the sound of the last trumpet, and awake too late.

Now to God, &c.

ON THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

I. PETER, ii. 21.

An ensample that ye should follow his steps.

THE example of Christ—is it not an effort beyond humanity? Would not the very attempt betray an absurd and impious presumption? Can the example of purity and perfection, of rectitude without deviation, and innocence without a stain, be urged upon frail and fallible creatures, whose passions and infirmities place them for ever beyond the reach or the hope of such attainments? What effect can such a model produce on those who can never hope to copy it, but gloomy awe, or cheerless despondence?

Such, my brethren, is the language of men who, looking only to themselves, and finding little beside weakness and sin, forget that the divine example not only offers

a model for our imitation, but supplies powers to attain the object it proposes—a strength not our own—a strength that "is made perfect in our weakness." Such is the language of those, who, sheltering themselves under a false humility, make their nominal reverence for Christianity a pretext for eluding its most positive obligations, and talk as if the praises they bestowed on the divine example entitled them to an exemption from their following it; as if the superior excellence of Christianity was a reason for declining to walk under its influence. A slight degree of attention bestowed upon the language of our text will convince those who are willing to be convinced how widely they err, in professing the religion of Christ, while they decline following the example of its teacher. In the first place, then, let it be remarked, that imitation is not attainment—that our professing to follow an example is a plain confession of our inferiority to what we propose—

and that men might be engaged, as they are in science, in a perpetual progress of improvement, useful, salutary, and consoling, though they can never flatter themselves with the hope of arriving at a point, beyond which there is no further improvement.

But it may be said the example of Christ, a model of sinless purity, is unfit for beings who neither possess his nature nor hope for his perfections! Here, my friends, let us mark a plain distinction: there is a vast difference between the character of Christ as the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind, and the judge of the human race, and Him who "took upon him our nature," became "touched with the feelings of our infirmities," was acquainted with all the sufferings and all the vicissitudes of life, tried all its various relations, descended to its lowest gradations, and can instruct all his disciples in the humbling lessons of that school of experience, through every class

of which, in infinite condescension, he passed himself. Mark the plain distinction between the office of the divine legislator and the duties of the man; the latter all are called on to fulfil, the former none but He could execute. The sublime and supernatural dignity of his character, the miracles he wrought, the prophecies he uttered, the words that he spake, as never man spake, and the sufferings that he underwent, alike beyond our human thoughts to conceive, or our strength to undergo, all this belongs not to man to imitate, but enough remains to make him "an ensample." Even in the most exalted parts of his character, those that seem most remote from human agency, there are many things, the spirit of which may be transfused into our conduct, and make "the disciple not unworthy of his master." It is not for us, with sacred zeal, and divine authority, to enter the temple, purge it of its pollutions, and drive from its insulted walls those who had

made it a den of thieves; but it *is* ours to examine and to purify the real temple of the Lord, that temple which he made for himself, and of which all earthly sanctuaries are but the type—*the human heart;* to drive out corruption thence, to lash forth the avarice, the worldliness, and the sensuality, that occupy it, as the money changers of old did the temple at Jerusalem, and to restore it to Him (who made it for himself), purged of those inmates who abused *it* and banished Him. It is not for us to march in triumph to Jerusalem, while those that went before, and those that followed, cried, saying, "Hosanna;" but it *is* for us to mark and to hail the progress of his grace in our hearts, and those of his faithful followers; to welcome it as those did who said, "Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord;" and to exult in his reception into his true kingdom, that "kingdom of God which is within us." It is not for us to still the

raging elements, and reduce them to a calm, by the words, "Peace, be still!" but, in the storms of life, we may turn our eyes, and those of our trembling fellow-passengers, to the strength of Him, whose word the wind and storm are only fulfilling, and who are, perhaps, only agents to bring us "to the haven where we would be." We cannot, like Him, raise the dead to life, banish the infirmities of nature by a word, and heal the corrosions of disease by a touch; but we *can* watch in patience by the bed of sickness; we can do that which many medicines cannot do—make the sufferer feel that bliss of sickness, the *soothings of a friend;* and by patience, and gentleness, and spiritual consolation, turn the visitation into a blessing, and make the bitter hour of nature's trial remembered as enriching a soul with the means of grace, and enlightening it with the hope of glory:—Nay, can we not do more? can we not "do all things through Christ that strengh-

ened us?". Though the infirmities and sufferings of nature defy redress and remedy, the soul is within our power, and its maladies, far more grievous both in their nature and effects, may be healed by the medicines which the Almighty physician has devised for our benefit, and instructed us to apply, for the benefit of others. By advice, by admonition, by a word spoken in season, and, above all, by *example*, we may enlighten eyes that were before blind, to "behold the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ"—we may open ears, that were once deaf, to hear the "precious promises" of the Gospel—we may quicken feet, that were once lame, to walk in the way of God's commandments. Nay, to them that are worse than dead, dead in trespasses and sins, we may call, and perhaps call with success, in the inspiring language of the Gospel, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light and life!"

But it is not alone to the public character of Christ, if I may say so, that we are to look for objects of imitation; they may be found in every part of life—for all the declivities of life He humbled himself to tread. There are emergencies which few individuals are called on to meet; but all are required, at times, to "comfort the feeble-minded," to "support the weak," to advise the doubtful, to reclaim the erring, to console the afflicted. All of us will be liable to encounter the perverseness of obstinacy, the sullen resistance of rooted prejudice, the teasing persecution of a captious and litigating temper, the eager malice of those who watch every word, with the hope of torturing every word to folly, or abusing it to a crime. Let us at those moments remember the patience with which our divine example condescended to enlighten a Nicodemus,—to confer with the woman of Samaria—to debate with the Pharisees and lawyers—

to refute the Sadducees—and, in the emphatic language of the apostle, "remember him who patiently endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." When compelled to enter into the house of mourning, should apathy chill our hearts, and prevent our imbibing the salutary lessons the scene should teach us, or should the distraction of worldly care make us insensible to the sufferings of our brethren, let us remember the gracious example of commiseration set by him who could not know sin, and, but for us, would never have known sorrow—let us remember, that, at the death of him, whom with a word he afterwards restored to life, "Jesus wept." There is not in life a variety, or a vicissitude—there is not an emergency, however rare, an incident, however humble—there is not a situation in which any individual can be placed by nature, fortune, or accident, to which he may not find a parallel in

the life of his divine Master—a parallel which there is no difficulty in finding, and, through divine power, there is none in applying.

And here let me remark of what infinite value it is to have a rule invariably just, and of universal application—we must either act on our own principles, or from the advice or example of others—in either case, may we not be dangerously, may we not be fatally deceived? Can any man rely implicitly on the rectitude of his intentions, the impartiality of his judgment, or the subjection of his passions? Can any man rely implicitly on the judgment of another, who has all his fallibility, and cannot have his interest? Can any one rely on advice, though given with all the energy of affection, and all the toil of deliberation, or on example, though all the world concurs to applaud it? Impossible! With man for his guide, man can never say, I am tho-

roughly safe, or I am perfectly right. Where, then, is he to turn?—To his Bible —to the book that contains all wisdom and all truth—to an example that cannot change, and that cannot deceive. A trembling apprehension of insecurity must accompany all our motions, when regulated by ourselves or others—the wisest have been mistaken, and the most virtuous have erred—but he, who, when assailed by temptation, or oppressed by doubts, opens the pages of inspiration for instruction, "that man shall be blessed in his deed." To lift an eye of humility to the example of Jesus Christ, and determine, in dependance on divine aid, to act as he would have acted—to do this, and to do it habitually, takes away all terror from doubt, and all sting from conscience. And hence it is, that the very perfection of our divine example, instead of repelling imitation, invites and sanctions it. Let us suppose, for instance, an example set before us, that,

in order to accommodate itself to our infirmities, admitted some defect, however trivial, and some error, however minute. I will venture to assert, that very defect would be seized, not only as the object of imitation, but of palliation, for the admission of a thousand others. Like the storms in those distant regions, where a single dark spot in the atmosphere foretells that the whole heaven will be soon covered with darkness and tempest—that single shade would be extended to darken our entire system—the universal language of man would be, if a character so pure erred, may not a similar indulgence be extended to us in other instances? and thus the incentive to excellence would become literally the minister of sin. But let him who employs sophistry to speak peace to the indulgence or the commission of sin look to the example of Christ, and every disguise will be at once torn away. Of what virtue is there not an example? of

what error is there an excuse? Every indulgence is given to the weakness of humanity, but none to its vices—every help is promised that nature needs; and debility itself, with such promises of assistance, becomes a crime.

One observation more, and I have done. It is on the infinite value of the divine example, from its being the only one capable of universal application. An example, to be of universal use, must have in it some qualities that belong to all to whom it can be applied—it must be placed in situations in which all have been, or may be placed—it must have some common tie of interest with all who are to benefit—it must be one of which every man can say, This may befal me; this may be my lot. Now, in the infinite diversity of human pursuits, and passions, and employments, is it possible there can be any thing in which all men are united? There is. All men are or have been unhappy; and Jesus Christ

was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Amid all the varieties of life, nothing is permanent but grief; amid all its vicissitudes, nothing certain, but that we must suffer, and must die. Men may have very different estimates and experience of the pleasures of life, but all are united in sufferings. Three-fourths of our fellow-creatures pass their existence on the bed of sickness, the den of poverty, or the chambers of mourning; and even those who seem distinguished by nature and fortune above their species, are subject to the fiercest outrages of both. Follow wealthy honoured men home to their habitations, pursue them to their closet, look into their hearts, and you find some secret corrosion, some internal torment, preying on and wasting existence, with a decay not less painful because it is hid from the public eye. To man thus circumstanced what a blessing is that religion, which may truly be called the re-

ligion of grief, of poverty, and of disease —that religion which was preached to the poor, the humble, and the broken-hearted! How consoling the call of Him who came "to seek and save that which was lost!" Amid the multiplied evils of life, is there one that Christ has not suffered, that we have not his example to support, and his consolation to heal? Is there a pang that can wring the heart, under which the sufferer may not say, Christ too hath suffered, and shall I dare to murmur?

It is blessed to turn our eyes from the vanity, the wickedness, and the worthlessness of life, to cast them on a view that shows us not only what man is, but what he might be, and what he yet shall be. When we look into our Bibles, we see *there* an estimate of life totally different from that made by the wisest of mankind,—we see its objects all of them referred to the will of God, and the interests of eternity—we see its happiness

made to depend, not on the triumph of our vices, the success of our interests, and the gratification of our passions, but on a devoted resignation of them and ourselves to the will of God, a holy tranquillity about things temporal, an anxious solicitude for things eternal, a satisfied belief that all things here "shall work together for our good," and a fixed expectation of happiness to be found *there* only, where "our treasure is," and "our hearts should be also:"—*there* we behold Christ laying down a system of truth, and a rule of life, alike plain to the understandings, and adapted for the practice of all mankind—calling to himself, out of a world of woe, those who "are weary and heavy laden"—exhorting them, with divine truth, and more than parental affection, that they spend no longer their money for that which is not meat, and their labour for that which satisfieth not—that they dream no more of that happiness which was never found *here*,

and seek that which shall assuredly be found by all who seek it "in spirit and in truth" *hereafter*—in a belief in what God hath revealed as its true source, and a confidence that he is able to realize and render it pure and perennial. May we, my brethren, so "learn Christ!" May we be taught, "not in words which man teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth," that, if we would seek peace, we must seek it at the foot of the cross—in the study of those truths that Jesus taught, and the imitation of that example which he left; and there, in the sacrifice of all earthly cares, and the submission of all earthly feelings, we shall find that "peace which passeth all understanding," and of which the effect is "quietness and assurance for ever."

Now to God, &c.

ON THE ATONEMENT.

MICAH, vi. 6, 7.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

THESE words, as the context informs us, are part of the question addressed by the unbelieving King of Moab to the prophet Balaam; and they present a vivid picture of the solicitude of the "natural mind" of man, when employed, as it sometimes will be, on the awful subject of its everlasting concerns.

Man, conscious (under every dispensation of religion, and every state of life; conscious even under the darkness of heathenism) that he is a sinner, must be conscious also that "his sins have separated between God and him"—that

he is in a state of hostility with a Being whose purity must be offended by his transgressions, and whose power may punish them with awful severity. Thus, the first rites of all religions *but one* are rites of propitiation—and the first feeling of every mind towards the Deity is, that between God and us there is a "great gulf fixed," which must be overpast or closed up before we can appear in his presence with hope or with confidence. This feeling is no local superstition, no mere result of a false religion and a morbid and distorted state of mind—it is the universal feeling of mankind wherever the Gospel of Christ is unknown, and is attested by the genius of every religion, the history of every nation, and the experience of every individual, since the birth of Adam:—men, feeling themselves sinners, justly conceive it necessary, that, in order to obey God acceptably, they must first be reconciled to him, and obtain indemnity for past offences, before

they have encouragement for future services, or security for future reward. For proof, look round the world—and the world copiously supplies the proof—we see man every where (when occupied in his religious concerns) considering it his most solemn care and most important duty to "make his peace with God."

The religion of the ancient world rested exclusively on this foundation; and when, in proof of it, we read of those *wise* and *enlightened* people, the ancients, sacrificing human victims, offering up their captives taken in war, immolating their very children, tearing their own flesh, and pouring out their own blood; nay, devoting their own lives as a propitiatory offering to their infernal gods, we meet a proof of the dreadful sincerity with which they entered into the spirit of their religion.

But it may be said such was the religion of the superstitious vulgar, and theirs is always a religion of terror and

of torture; but what was the religion of the wise? of those intellectual heroes of the days of old? of the philosophers of Greece and Rome? That is known with sufficient ease from their writings: we find in most of them an abject conformity to the superstitions of their age and country, however gross, bloody, or impure; and we find a few, who, possessing wisdom enough to discover the vanity and wickedness of the absurd and sanguinary rites of the popular worship, but not possessing a knowledge of that Gospel which can alone unfold to man how "God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus," took refuge in an intermediate situation, and rested content with the comfortable persuasion; that, if there were gods, they were beings who, removed at an immeasurable distance from human agents, beheld human actions and their consequences in profound apathy, and looked on vice and virtue, and suffering and

enjoyment, without discrimination, and without regard. Justly may it be said of such, that, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

It may, perhaps, be imagined that these were the follies of the world in her early age, but that she has grown wiser since. I believe there are subjects on which the world will never grow wiser: the world knows not "the wisdom which is from above." It is not merely to ancient heathenism that we are to look for the developement of this principle—modern observations suggest precisely the same conclusion. It is incredible what horrors are exercised under its influence by modern idolators. Look to the East—the burnings, the tortures, the famishings, the macerations, undergone by the adherents to the Indian mythology, are enough to put to the blush the proudest pleader for canonization in the catholic calendar; and, while they demonstrate the existence and tendency of

this principle, they mark it with a force that should make us tremble at its fearful operation, while we reflect it is a principle common to all men. Nor are these abuses confined to men drunk with the spirit of an idolatrous religion, and mad with the pride of purchasing spiritual immunities by physical sufferings. No: so general is this feeling, that it predominates even among those who profess to enjoy the light of the Gospel, though in direct opposition to its light:—it is the avowed principle of the most populous department of the Christian profession, the engine by which the whole machinery of her vast system is wrought; and, in support of it, she not only calls in the sufferings of her saints, and the merits of her martyrs, but she employs self-inflictions of the severest kind—the vigil and the fast, the penance and the scourge—to balance the weight which the anger of heaven has hung in the opposite scale. In fact, if we examine

closely, we shall find little difference between the devotion of a flagellant, a monk of La Trappe, a begging bonzé, and a worshipper of Jaggernaut, except in the names of the idols to whom their false and foolish modes of propitiation are dedicated. And yet, though they would find it impossible, by the aid of reason or of Scripture, to trace any the least connexion between the laceration of their perishing bodies, and their being in a state of divine acceptance more or less, yet still they will persist, in a desperate hope of propitiating the Deity by doing that which can avail as little towards the removal of inward corruption as it can avail towards pleasing Him, who, "being a Spirit, must be worshipped in spirit and in truth;" who hath declared that his "sacrifice is a troubled spirit," and that he will not be appeased by outward service, though we sacrificed all that is precious to nature, "though we gave our first-born for our transgression,

the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul."

There is a passage in Scripture which, independent of the delight its rich, and magnificent, and truly oriental painting must give to the eye of imagination, appears to me to bear on this very point with a force irresistibly demonstrative—it is that awful passage in the first book of Kings, where the voices and hearts of all Israel are, by the voice of Elijah, summoned to issue on the solemn question, whether Baal or Jehovah was to be their God? On one side we behold the prophet of the Lord standing alone by the deserted altar; on the other the priests of Baal, "four hundred and fifty men."

The one stands by his altar in silence—patient, solemn, and believing: the others cry with a loud voice, even from morning till the "ascending of the evening sacrifice." Then they redouble their efforts—they pursue their frantic dance around the altar of their idol—"they

cut themselves with knives and lancets, after their manner, till the blood gushed out upon them." I am convinced, that any witness of this scene, judging from his natural feelings, would have pronounced the priests of Baal the sincere and zealous worshippers of their god, and Elijah a cold and formal professor of a religion that had neither awakened his conscience nor touched his heart—their earnestness, their supplications, and their sufferings, would have pleaded with him for their sincerity; and he must have believed that the religion which could have inspired such *sacrifices* must be the true one. But he would have judged falsely. To the shrieks, the invocations, and the blood-shedding of the worshippers of the idol, there was "no voice, nor any that answered." But when the prophet uttered his simple and solemn prayer, then "the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust,

and licked up the water that was in the trench; and when the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord, he is the God! the Lord, he is the God!"

But it is not only among the professors of idolatry, whether ancient or modern, that this principle of self-atonement has taken up its residence: it has a rooted and rivetted hold of the heart of man, let his creed be what it may, as the rough reformer said of old, that every man was a pope to himself*.

It has been justly observed, that there are some favourite sentiments among mankind, which, though never embodied in an express form of words, nor possessing the authority of a standard maxim, yet prove their popularity, by their occurring on almost every occasion that the incidents of life afford. Such is the sentiment I allude to. When we

* The original expression is somewhat gross; but I believe I have preserved its meaning.

hear of some distinguished calamity, some painful distemper, some acute trial of body or mind, what is our general expression?—a hope that the sufferer may have expiated his offences by the afflictive dispensation he is undergoing.

Nay, how often do we "lay the same flattering unction to our own souls?" How often, when speaking of our own inflictions of mind, or body, or circumstance, do we, either verbally or mentally, utter the exclamation, Oh! that my sufferings may be accepted as a partial atonement for my offences? though sensible, as we must be, from hourly experience, that the natural tendency of suffering is rather to exasperate the passions, and ulcerate the heart, than to subdue the one or ameliorate the other.

It is not always that we are so grossly deluded as to ascribe to our sufferings, whether bodily or mental, the power of making our peace with God:—a more refined and imposing medium is some-

times substituted for physical sufferings, and its efficacy relied on with equal confidence and equal fallacy.

There are multitudes who recoil from the mere representation of the bloody and brutal rites of paganism, and who view, with philosophic compassion, the fruitless "voluntary humility" of modern idolaters. Such may spare their compassion; perhaps it may be needed for themselves, and for their own system. Every man must have an agent in his concerns with God and his soul. And what is the agent they employ? They can mock (and justly, no doubt) at the falsehood, the folly, and the barbarity of imagining that *pain* can propitiate the Deity, or make atonement for sin; and they employ good resolutions (as they are called)—determinations of amendment, forced on them by temporary conviction—supported by casual visitations—accompanied, perhaps, by vows—perhaps solemnized by prayer. And of what

avail these are, let the experience of those who have tried them declare: They are characters written on the sand, effaced by the next blast of passion, or the next returning tide of temptation, and leaving us just what we were before —a waste—a desert, without culture and without fruit:—it is a strong but just expression of some continental preacher—"Hell is paved with good resolutions."

Such—yes, such is the moral sense of the *unenlightened world*, of that world which "knows not God." It is a compound of pride, and fear, and infidelity, —acting, indeed, variously on various minds, but in all producing the same deadly effects of temporary conviction, anxious alarm, palliative expedients, and ultimate disappointment or despair, till the well-purposed reformer of thirty finds himself the hardened sinner of threescore and ten; and then, dreading the testimony of conscience, alike with a reference to what has passed and what is to

come, pacifies himself by some general and hollow talk about the infirmities of nature, and the boundless beneficence of the Deity, and dies—*forgetting—but not forgot.*

But while, on a calm and candid view of this and every other mode of propitiating the Deity which has been suggested by the pride or the fear of man, we pronounce them all equally empty and unavailing—while we declare, that, in the sight of Him "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," nothing can render his fallen creatures acceptable, save that which purifies their consciences, converts their minds, and renews their natures—and that, with reference to this great and sole object, we must view with equal disregard (as equally inefficacious) the sanguinary rites of heathenism, the voluntary and unauthorised self-inflictions of modern idolatry, and all the inferior expedients of corporeal sufferings, transient remorse,

fugitive resolutions, partial amendments, and the whole train of unsanctified and unscriptural devotions—while we declare this (and declare it on an authority that may be doubted, but never can be shaken), it may perhaps be asked, why do you labour to prove unavailing what you yourself admit to be necessary? The genius of universal religion—the experience of all mankind—our consciousness of our own wants, weaknesses, and exigencies—all lead, all urge us to seek for some atonement, some means to reconcile us to the Deity; and, while you endeavour to prove all the means resorted to as ineffectual and unacceptable, do you not strike at the very root of that conviction which you yourself admit to be true, salutary, and important? God forbid! The danger I have laboured to point out to you does not arise from man's conviction of the *necessity of an atonement*—for *that* I would contend while the power of speech remained to

me:—no, my brethren, it is, in the way in which that atonement is to be sought—it is in the source from which it is to be derived—it is in the power by whom it is to be bestowed, that the general and deadly error of mankind lies:—in supposing that those powers exist in and are exercised by himself—that, in spite of his alienation from God, he can bring himself nigh to him whenever he pleases to return—that, in spite of his multiplied offences, he can purchase indemnity for himself by devices of his own invention—that, in spite of his habitual corruption, he can renew his nature by the adoption of certain expedients within his own reach, and at his own option. —No, my brethren. Again I repeat, the error of man consists, not in a deeply-wrought conviction of the necessity of an atonement, but in making that conviction a foundation for his pride to erect its fancied claims on the divine justice, and his self-righteousness to

flatter itself with the hopes of meritorious exertion.

Has the Deity, then, left this universal want of mankind without supply, and without regard? Has he left this cry from the hearts of all his creatures unanswered?

I answer, in the words that follow my text, "He hath shewed thee, O man! what is good."

I answer, in the words of the Patriarch, when Isaac demanded who was to be the sacrifice, "My son, God will provide himself a burnt-offering." And he *has* provided it in a way at once the most suitable to his own glory, the most congenial to the harmony of the divine attributes, and adapted, with unspeakable wisdom and felicity, to the lost and hopeless state of his guilty creatures.

Hear it, my friends—you have, indeed, often heard it. Would to God that now, believing it from the heart, you might receive the full blessedness of that

stupendous intelligence, and rejoice "with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"—that, being justified by his grace, through that atonement which he hath accepted, we should have a ground of confidence before God—and, being reconciled to Him through the death of his Son, we should walk acceptably before him, in newness of life.

And observe, I beseech you, brethren, that, while this glorious Gospel holds forth to us all that can be required or hoped for on the part of man, while it proclaims, to every sinner under heaven, repentance and remission of sins, power to serve God with a "quiet mind," and a "hope full of immortality"—that all this rich display of mercy is perfectly consistent with the immutable holiness

and unchanging attributes of the divine character. Here is no derogation of the divine majesty, no impeachment of the divine justice, no abridgment of the divine laws, no degrading compromise of the divine glory, such as forms the foundation of every human scheme of atonement. Well might the apostle exclaim, in awful rapture and sacred wonder at that united lustre of opposing rays which shines forth in the declaration, that "God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

I will trespass on your time no longer than may suffice to point out a few instances of the difference between the proud and weak imaginations of man and the truth of Him, whose "thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways."

All systems invented by man originate in inadequate conceptions of the nature and extent of his own sinfulness, or unworthy ones of the character of the Deity. The Gospel, on the other hand,

not only reveals to man the profoundest knowledge of himself (that knowledge, compared with which all else is foolishness), but discloses to him also as much of the divine character as it is perhaps possible for the human mind on this side of eternity to conceive.

Man may allow himself to be liable to infirmities:—the Gospel pronounces him prone to sin. Man loves to believe his errors venial, transient, and incidental:—the Gospel declares them to be rooted and constitutional. Man seeks to charge his vices on temptation and opportunity; and cherishes the thought, that, amid many external and superficial evils, *his heart is good*:—the Gospel traces every evil to the corruption of *his nature*, pronounces his "heart deceitful and desperately wicked," and his mind, on whose interior and ultimate purity he prides himself, to be "enmity against God." Man makes his false and hollow resolutions, nay, his very passions (in the con-

vulsions of a delirious penitence), his advocates with the Almighty:—the Gospel proclaims there is but "one mediator between God and man—Christ Jesus."

Brethren, in these contrasted systems life and death are set before you—"choose ye this day whom ye will serve." If, following the imposing but perilous devices of the pride and fear of your guilty natures, ye "reject the counsel of God against yourselves," ye perish; but if ye cast yourselves on the mercy of God, as revealed in the Gospel of his Son—if ye seek him in the way which he hath appointed, through Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life"—if, rejecting every other dependence (as flattering to the pride as it is fallacious to the hope of man) ye look in simplicity of heart and singleness of eye to Him whom "the Father hath exalted to be a prince and saviour," "as the Lord liveth" "your souls shall live."

I will not debase a declaration of the

Gospel, by affecting to guard it against misconstruction, by affecting to admit that its doctrines are capable of being wrested to licentiousness, or that the holy Jesus can become "the minister of sin:"—No—as one of its best advocates once said, "the Gospel will guard itself." But while I earnestly contend that "other foundation can no man lay, save that which *is* laid (by the hand of the Almighty), even Jesus Christ," I contend as earnestly that, where that foundation is laid, there will be a suitable and goodly fabric of heavenly tempers, of holy lives, abounding in the fruits of faith (the substantial fruit of good works) erected on it.

Let them, then, that "know the truth as it is in Jesus," and have "believed in God, be careful to maintain good works"—so shall they convince the gainsayers (more than many words)—so shall their "own heart condemn them not"—so shall they "show forth the praises of

Him who hath called them into his marvellous light"—and, being "not weary of well-doing," "in due season shall reap, if they faint not."

Now to God, &c.

ON THE PROMISE OF THE LIFE THAT NOW IS.

TIMOTHY, iv. 8.

Having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

THE first and last conviction I would wish to impress on every hearer, is the spirituality of Christianity—that it speaks to us solely on the subject of our eternal interests—that it has nothing to say to this world, its claims, or its concerns, except so far as the connexion between our actions here and our destination hereafter makes it necessary. This is the conviction that strikes us whenever we open our Bibles—its contents are utterly distinct from those of any other book:—all other religious books manifestly betray their author—they inculcate some principle, or lay down some rule, from which nothing but external consequences can follow—the world,

however disguised, presents itself as the predominant object of what they teach; and a certain effect is always to be produced with reference to that, which shows that its spirit is of the earth, earthly. Something utterly opposite to this pervades the Bible: when we lay our hands on it, we are transported into another state of existence—the agents seem to have nothing to do with this life —with earnest, awful conviction, they call upon man to remember the country of which he is the native and the heir, and to press through this desert of his pilgrimage without a thought but of its weariness and sterility. "My kingdom is not of this world!" is the exclamation of Christ: "We commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," is the declaration of the apostles. Divine evidences of spiritual truth! They appeal— not by laboured demonstrations—not by powerful and vivid description—not by any act or process of excitement—they

do not address the reason exclusively, which must have shut out a vast number whose faculties are not able to bear the burden of demonstration,—still less do they apply to the passions, whose treacherous alliance makes the party they attach themselves to always the sufferer —No; as becomes a revelation from God, they address themselves to that part of man, by which alone he is distinguished from other animals—his conscience,—they strip him of the disguises of mortality—they consider him as standing naked and unclothed before God—they treat him as they would the agent of another world. The few years he has to live, the petty interests he is involved in, his hopes and his fears, are as dust in the balance which weighs eternity —they pass over life; and, considering man as on the brink of the grave, begin to speak to him of the concerns of that existence which must begin then, and must end no more. The powers by

which they move mankind are "the powers of the world to come"—the only powers that can operate on man permanently, invariably, and effectually—because the source of them is found within every man; and to their solemn warning, whenever or wherever heard, the conscience of man gives an involuntary echo. They are the only powers by which mankind can be universally moved. Every other feeling has its date: many are constitutionally exempt from the influence of the strongest—many can hardly imagine what pleasure the disturbers of the earth feel in hallooing the hounds of carnage against the human species, and reducing half mankind to corses, to compose a tottering throne out of their bones; that must soon be changed for a monument—many live their whole lives such strangers to the fiercer passions that agitate life, that, when they read of the effects of revenge and ambition, of love and of

hatred, on human life, they lift up their hands, and wonder who could do them. But where is the human being who has never hoped or feared futurity? Where is the being who does not feel that restless consciousness of immortality within him that forbids him to sit down to the banquet of life while the sword of destiny impends over him? Man bears witness to the feeling in every stage of existence. The very first sounds almost that attract the ears of childhood are tales of another life—foolishly are they called tales of superstition; for, however disguised by the vulgarity of the narration, and the distortion of fiction, they tell him of those whom he is hastening from the threshold of life to join, the inhabitants of the invisible world, with whom he must soon be, and be for ever. And what an echo does the narrative find in the sensibility even of infancy! Long before the child has sense to apprehend the rudiments of any science,

he knows the most awful and powerful of all distinctions, the distinction of life and death, and dreads the thought of the inmates of a future state, whom imagination paints like their remains—cold, pale, and frightful.

Nor is infancy alone thus affected: a mass of the writings of all lettered nations, and of the tales of uncivilized, devoted to this subject, keep their strong hold of the human heart, and maintain their popularity; while other writings of every kind, like their authors, pass away and are heard of no more. Nay, with vindictive strength does this feeling maintain its influence among those who struggle to reject it; and infidels, who, (like cowards), think they can hide their fears by denying them, live their whole lives in alternate paroxysms of superstition and scepticism. The writings of one of the most active unbelievers of the last century abound in tales that would disgrace a nursery; and one of

the most intellectual of them died under the terrors of a supernatural visitation*. Oh! my brethren, what a view does the contemplation of this universal mover of human life give us of life itself! We no longer behold each other with the eyes of the flesh—we see each other as we truly are, and as we shall one day be beheld by the great God, and the spiritual world. A number of beings, impelled in a path, which they traverse, as it were, in a moment, a path in which there are various tracks, and in which they move in different disguises, but which leads them to one bourne, where all tracks alike terminate, and where all disguises must alike be thrown off. Great God! if this be true, how little does it avail whether a few spots in our way be rough or smooth, or the garments we wear be embroidered all over with the finger of vanity, or scarce sufficient

* Lord Lyttelton.

to keep out the blast!—the end is the same. All the titles emblazoned on our coffins will not prevent our corses from festering within, nor will the narrow squalid shell keep the body of a Lazarus from rising from the house of corruption. 'He died' is the only intelligible inscription ever put on a grave, unless we place the solemn and emphatic epitaph of David on the tombs of the disturbers of mankind—" the proud are robbed, they have slept their sleep, and all the men whose hands were mighty have found nothing."

And the feelings that arise from the contemplation of a future state are not only the most universal that can operate on the human heart, but the most interesting, both in their source and in their operation: there is nothing else in which all mankind feel one common interest—there is nothing else that binds, by one common chord of the heart, those whom the extremes of life have divided

ever so far asunder. Look round life, and you see a perpetual variety of views, and perplexity of interests—you see multitudes who would be rendered miserable by the attainment of objects which others make the sum of their felicity—and you see, where there is a unity of view, and many contend for the same objects, the very competition deprives them of success in the pursuit, or happiness in the enjoyment. We cannot all be sovereigns, or statesmen, or heroes, for then we would want objects to exercise our power on: nor, if we rate our wishes much lower, can we rationally reckon on their fulfilment. No man perhaps ever was, or ever will be, what he wished in life: nor is this owing to the folly of human vanity, but to the imperfection of human existence; no man can promise himself the enjoyment of any one earthly good—if goods they are; no man can be certain of the triumphs of genius, the luxuries of plea-

sure, or the exuberance of wealth, because it is their very nature to wither up all the sensibility requisite for their enjoyment. But, supposing a man to limit his wishes to what is not only lawful, but commendable to desire—health, peace, and competence—are they not, if we take an impartial view of life, as much beyond the reach of human attainment as the highest distinctions? How many labour for them through the whole of human existence, and labour in vain? How many perish for actual want? No man can reckon on the comforts of this life for a day—but every man may secure the blessings of eternity. And every Christian will ensure the enjoyments of both; for godliness hath "the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

And, blessed be God, this promise is alike extended to all. It is not, as many have rashly supposed from a misconstrued text, confined to a peculiar

class in society. If it be true, that not many wise, not many mighty of the earth, are found among the disciples of Christ—it is not because they have not been "called," but because they have refused to obey the call. Godliness offers her rich and ample promise alike to the lowly and the eminent; and doubtless finds as many who reject her among the former class as the latter. It is an absurd and mischievous prejudice that supposes the existence of vice confined to the higher classes of life, and virtue (as they call it) the everlasting inhabitant of a cottage—it is a prejudice originating in utter ignorance of life, cherished by the silly illusions of pastoral poetry, and inflamed by the wild and wicked ravings of political enthusiasts, for their own reasons, without any reason in nature or in life.

God knows, and all the world knows, that there is more evil among the lower classes than among any other in society;

and that, not because they are *lower*, but because they are more destitute of the benefits of knowledge, and the blessings of religion—because they are more ignorant—and of ignorance the almost certain companion is vice.

I know there is not a more glorious object in the eye of God or man than a poor man acquainted with and acting on the truths of the Gospel—but I know that such an object is as rare as it is glorious,—and to such a one, and to all of us, how does the Gospel verify its promise of "the life that now is," seeing that it really withholds or forbids all that is promising in the eyes of the world:—First, by teaching us, in whatever station of life we are, "therewith to *be content;*" and thus bestowing on us that inestimable acquirement which all men everywhere are seeking, and almost all seeking in vain. Blessed exchange this for all the paltry, feverish, and irritating excitements of human pursuits! This is

the promise of the life which now is, that the Gospel offers to its real professors, and this the world can neither give nor take away. *He who in this life lives to man must be disappointed—He who lives to himself must be wretched—He who lives to God must be happy*—and, in all the vicissitudes of human existence, he, and he alone, shall have, not only the "promise of the life that now is," but of that which is to come.

Let us take a few instances of this from the various parts of life—let us look at men engaged in the highest public duties. From what motive does man enter on a task so arduous and so complicated? Is it for the display of his superior talents? Emulation will obscure and may confound them, envy will certainly assail and blast them, superior power may crush them, inferior, far inferior power, may undermine them. Is it from ambition? woe be to him! let him turn the page of history; nay, let

him turn to modern example, and view him to whom crowns were as toys, and armies as the dust of his feet, in solitary, unpitied, merited exile, wretched because he has no longer the power to make others wretched; and well addressed by the departed disturbers of the earth, in the sublime language of the prophet, "Art thou become weak as one of us?" Is a man's motive for entering on public life the gratification of his pride? Let him remember the crime that drew the third part of heaven's host, and let him remember that the same crime will draw all its victims into the same condemnation and the same punishment. From whatever worldly motive men engage in the higher parts of life, the jealousy of their superiors, the envy of their competitors, and the execration of their ignorant indiscriminating inferiors, will well avenge that motive—whatever be the weights thrown into the tottering balance of human greatness, dust they

are, and to dust they shall return. They have no promise of the life that now is—they forfeited the promise of that which is to come—their only comfort is, that posterity may weep and blush over the ashes of those whom they persecuted and neglected while alive—and surely no one will grudge the good that this late retribution may do their mouldering skeletons:—Such is the end of worldly greatness pursued on worldly motives. But look to the man, who, in the discharge of his public duties, looks to God alone for his motive and his reward, and you will see one to whom success and disappointment are the same in result, though they may differ in name:—the one will teach gratitude, the other resignation; and both, therefore, will answer the same end—that of confirming to him the promise of the life that now is, by showing that all its changes only contribute to his spiritual interests, by acting variously but usefully on the

causes that promote it, and brightening the promise of that which is to come, by pointing him to that where there is neither "variableness nor shadow of turning," and where the ultimate results of his efforts for peace on earth, and good will towards men, will be realized beyond all hope and all power of human agency here. In the success of his best purposes he will look with greater gratitude to the Deity, and feel more joy for the operation of his hands than the worldling can give for the fancied work of his own; and, in disappointment, he will have a resource that the worldling can never have,—he will know and feel that the arm which has struck the schemes of man to the dust can erect a more glorious fabric of his own on the ruins; and that the wind and the storm, which wreck the hopes of man, are but fulfilling his word, and will finally conduct the passenger to the haven where he would be. Even in the humbler classes of life the Chris-

tian, and he alone, has the promise that is the certainty of comfort and peace in this life. He has no security that his plans of earthly comfort, however judiciously laid, or moderately pursued, will be blessed—No,—but he has a security a thousand times more valuable—that disappointment and disaster will be blessed as salutary monitors—that he will enjoy, yes, *enjoy* the defeat of his worldly hopes, by being enabled to view them as the merciful chastenings of a father, more, more infinitely than ever the proud and prosperous enjoyed success as the works of their own hands. He knows that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" and thus, in the midst of suffering, the Christian has more enjoyment in the lesson which it teaches him, and the hand which he refers it to, than the worldling in the very triumph of temporal felicity. Thus hath godliness the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which

is to come—a promise (not of its goods indeed, but) of its evils being converted into blessings, of the waves of trouble being divided before them, and the traveller going over dry-shod, while those waters that overwhelm others are to him a wall on the right hand and on the left.

Lastly; godliness hath a promise of the life that now is, from that blessed peace, that assured calm, which it bestows on all who imbibe its spirit, and walk under its influence. When Christ was leaving his disciples, he announced to them the sufferings they must undergo for his sake, sufferings which none, unsustained by his Spirit, could have supported—he spoke to them of bonds, imprisonment, and death—but he added, *Peace I leave with you;* and he said what the experience of every child of God has proved blessedly true—they have "a peace that the world cannot give, a peace that passeth all understanding." We are apt, in making our estimate

of the evils of life, to dwell too much on those which assail us from without, and too little on those that assail us from within. If, through the grace of God, and the power of his Gospel, our own evil passions are subdued, and our nature converted, from the passions of others we have little to suffer, and little to fear: if our own pride is humbled—if our own angry emotions are suppressed—if hatred and wrath are banished—we shall go through life blessing and blessed. Oh! then, my brethren, for God's sake, for our interest's sake, both mortal and immortal, as we value time, or dread futurity, let us seek the godliness that hath the promise, both of this life, and of that which is to come!

Now to God, &c.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

ST. LUKE, xv. 11.

A certain man had two sons.

We are all acquainted with the parable of the prodigal son, perhaps the most beautiful and instructive that issued from the lips even of "Him who spake as never man spake." Would that we were as well acquainted with the application as with the narrative! To that application I will try to draw your attention this day.

But before I do so, permit me to remark to you the peculiar mode in which Jesus condescended to convey instruction to his disciples and to the world. It is not the mode which a teacher would adopt, who rested the effect of his lessons on his popularity—it is unassuming and colloquial—it disarms unbelief, hostility, and even suspicion. He was no "Boa-

nerges, no son of thunder"—with reverence I speak it, Christ never seems to seat himself in the preacher's chair to give a premeditated lecture. From a casual question, from the ordinary circumstances of human life, from the simplest phænomena of nature, he condescends to take an opportunity of pouring light and knowledge on the soul of man; and his instructions have, therefore, not only the widest variety, but the deepest interest. He knows every avenue to the heart of man, and by every avenue he seeks to approach it—by admonition, and by intreaty—by the plainest language, and by the richest allegory—by the affections of humanity, and the eloquence of heaven—he calls upon those who have ears to hear, or who have hearts to feel.

In the history of the Gospel, it is to circumstances obviously accidental that we owe the most profound and precious discoveries of divine truth; and the

nightly visit of Nicodemus, and the casual meeting with the woman of Samaria, give occasion for the richest effusions of wisdom, truth, and peace, from the lips of Him who "spake as never man spake." By such a mode of instruction is the gainsayer most likely to be convinced, and the believer to be comforted. The gainsayer convinced, because the mode of address is so unexpected as to preclude the possibility of design, or the suspicion of imposture: and the believer comforted, because, if the head has one faculty, or the heart one feeling, there is employment for both in that unpremeditated variety of topic, that applies to every hearer, and embraces every part of life.

The parable in our text sets out with acquainting us that a certain man had two sons, of whom the younger, either disliking the salutary restraints of paternal authority, or believing, with the natural temerity of youth, that his own

abilities and exertions were more likely to promote his happiness than paternal care and admonition, demanded of his father "the portion of goods that fell to his lot," and then "took his journey into a far country." How striking and exact a representation is this of the natural and wilful alienation of man from his heavenly father! Our first parent, placed in a state of felicity beyond our impaired and polluted powers to conceive, was not content to remain in the mansion where he momently enjoyed the presence of his divine parent—he deserted him in search of happiness of his own creation—and all his posterity have followed his example. At our very first entrance into life, we demand our portion from our parent—the time, the talents, the powers of body and mind, the "goods" which, by his bounty, have "fallen to our lot," and, with equal ingratitude and folly, desert him, to devote his own gifts to the service of a different

master. Those powers bestowed on us, no less for the glory of the giver than for our own industrious cultivation and self-enriching improvement, we expend on every object but that for which they were intrusted to us; and, if not prostituted to vice, or wasted in folly, they are devoted to the service of the natural idol of every heart—*self*. Self, in some way, is the object of our perverted powers, from the cradle to the death-bed:—through life we toil for the accumulation of wealth that cannot follow us—of pleasures that torment us by their inefficiency, even in the moment of fruition—or of distinction that must soon be mocked by the very coffin on which its titles are inscribed, for the dust to cover, and the worm to consume.

Thus, like the prodigal, do we wander into a far country, and never think we can go far enough to escape the consciousness of our alienation from God; and the still bitterer conviction, that

every effort to remove further places us at a greater distance from happiness and from Him.

But here let me observe how differently *we* are circumstanced from the character in the parable, and how much more criminal is our defection than his.

The prodigal demanded from his father only what he conceived he had a right to; and, in claiming the portion of goods that fell to his lot, he claimed merely what the laws of nature and the habits of society entitle every man to receive from a parent who is enabled to bestow it.

But we, in withdrawing our powers from our heavenly father, are guilty, not only of the wildest ingratitude, but the most impious rebellion—we usurp what is not our own; and we aggravate our disobedience, by devoting them to the service of an enemy:—they are his, not ours—his gift, not our right; and we pervert them to the service of those very passions

and vices which he bestowed them on us to contend with and to subdue.

Again; the children of this world, in claiming their portion, claim not only that which is their right, but that of which *their own* management may be of advantage to them. We may distrust the wisdom, we may doubt the active zeal, or even, in some cases, the affection of an earthly parent—we may conceive, and sometimes perhaps justly, that, by a vigorous exercise of our own talents, and a judicious management of our own patrimony, we may improve and enlarge that portion of goods which has fallen to our lot—but, can this be the case in our dealings with our heavenly parent? Can we ever believe that the directions in which we employ our powers, the purposes to which we devote them, can be so beneficial to us as those which he has pointed out? or that those powers will ever bring us in so fruitful a return, or so rich a reward, when employed ac-

cording to the caprices of human folly, as according to the dictates of divine wisdom? A child's interest *may possibly* be promoted more by his own exertions than by those of the most partial parent; but who can deny, that, in withdrawing ourselves from the service of our heavenly parent, we withhold from our powers their highest dignity, from our being its worthiest distinction, and from ourselves our only happiness?

The great God can will nothing but the happiness of his creatures. Infinitely blessed in his own perfections, it is his will that a portion of that blessedness should emanate to all his creatures: this is doubtless the end of all the plans of his providence, and the operations of his grace; and, with all our pride, can we presume to be as good judges of what will make us happy, as God himself in all the infinite intelligence of divine wisdom, and all the glorious opulence of divine munificence? Oh no, my brethren! here

the folly of the poor prodigal is far out-done by ours: he doubted an earthly parent—we will not trust a heavenly one with that happiness, of which he alone can be the author, the object, and the completion.

We shall find the truth of this comparison confirmed, if we attend the prodigal in his progress, after his desertion of his father and of his duty. With brief but emphatic simplicity the narrative proceeds to inform us, "He went into a far country, and wasted his substance in riotous living; and it came to pass that there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want." My brethren, do we not perceive in this representation a vivid picture of the consequences which must attend our alienation from God, as necessarily as temporal want and destitution will probably attend our desertion of our earthly parents? Whatever hopes the prodigal had conceived, whatever visions of future felicity

and eminence he might have indulged in,—however he might have flattered himself, that, when freed from paternal constraint, his future life would only be a passage over a path of flowers,—the consequence was, that he "wasted his substance in riotous living," and at last "began to be in want."

Oh! my brethren, that we were wise to profit by this lesson—that we could be convinced, whatever phantoms of ambition, interest, or pleasure, are seducing our imaginations—we will, we must at last discover that after all we too have "wasted our substance"—thrown away the powers entrusted to us, and abused them to a prostituted service, from which our return has been disappointment, loss, and beggary. It avails not that some, devoted to the *sober intoxication* of worldly profit, may comfort themselves that their substance has not been wasted at least in "riotous living," in the frolics of levity, or the

abominations of sensuality. Whatever alienates us from God, whether it be the riot of the prodigal, or the cold, and heartless, and self-centered pursuits of the worldling, it matters not—the consequence is the same—" the substance is wasted," and the end of being lost—and sooner or later we shall find a mighty famine to arise in that land to which we fled in the madness of our apostacy, believing it a land of everlasting plenty, and we " shall begin to be in want."

In the first days of our flight we flatter ourselves, like the prodigal, that our felicity will be without measure, and our enjoyment without end. But the decrees of Heaven, and the unalterable analogies of Providence, are against us. To whatever side of life we turn, vicissitudes are revolving, disappointment menacing, or distress impending. Health, if not destroyed by disease, must be decayed by time—friends may

desert, wealth be dissipated, character blasted, without crime—or, should the usual conditions of life be inverted for us —should plenty and prosperity smile on our path, to its very termination—should our wives be as the vine on the walls of our house, and our children like the olive-branches round about our table," and the gleam of health and felicity brighten the wintry evening of our age,— yet still, while our resources are merely human, "there will be a famine in the land." The want of a God to look to in our parting hour—the want of a "hope full of immortality"—the want of a spiritual religion (that only "anchor of the soul sure and stedfast"), to support us in our awful passage through the "varied modes of endless being"—the want of the "rod and staff," when our feet are about to tread the "valley of the shadow of death," the confines of "the land where all things are forgotten."

I said, sooner or later the prodigal will

feel a famine in the land where he sojourns. I recal the expression—*he will feel it soon.*

All who have deserted God will *soon* be taught to feel "it is a bitter and evil thing to depart from the Lord." So felt the prodigal, when he went into the fields as an hireling to feed swine, and would "fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him." Thus the soul, in its last stage of degradation, will feed on the very offals of sin, will prey with outrageous and depraved voracity on the vilest garbage, on husks that swine would not eat; yea, famish in its desperate, proud, abject depravity, before it is compelled to the confession, that in "its Father's house there is bread enough and to spare, while it perishes for want." The conviction comes at last—the prodigal "comes to himself;" and the parable proceeds to tell us, "when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants

of my father's house have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with want." I know no language comprehensive and expressive like the words "when he came to himself:"—it conveys, in the most powerful, though the most simple terms, the change wrought on the mind of a sinner, by comparing it to the restoration of a distempered mind from a state of delirium—and such surely is the state of a sinner who has wandered from God,—and well may his recovered consciousness of his wretched state be described by the words "coming to himself." When we come to ourselves, when we return to sanity of intellect and power of conscience, then at once we come to God: we resolve to "arise and go to our father"—to confess the depravity and misery consequent on our desertion from him—to exclaim, "we have sinned against heaven, and in his sight; and are no more worthy to be called his sons." The first feeling attendant on this con-

sciousness of wretchedness and guilt is profound humiliation; and thus the prodigal exclaims, on his return, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son! make me as one of thy hired servants!" He lays no claim to his forfeited inheritance —he urges no title to his father's indulgence—he asks no more, in proud and selfish insolence, for the portion of goods that falleth to his lot—he requires merely to be permitted to share with "hired servants" that bread, of which he acknowledges himself no longer worthy. —But what is the father's answer? "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet."

At this beautiful natural picture of paternal kindness and filial humiliation is there a heart of parent or of child that does not beat and burn within them? Surely he alone who made the human heart, and who knows the secrets of his own work, could thus explore its finest

chords, and make the most glowing affections of nature minister to the illustrations of the glories of grace. Yes, my brethren, however touching the representation of the affection of the parent, and the humble wretchedness of the son, they are but a faint shadowing of that mercy displayed to the *true prodigal*—the awakened sinner, who is turned from the power of Satan unto God.

Like the wanderer in the parable, he (when, through the power of divine grace, he comes to himself) sees nothing around him but desolation and dismay, feels nothing within him but self-loathing and abasement. He dreads the wrath of that father whom he has abandoned, the forfeiture of that inheritance he has wasted. To regain his former situation in his once-despised mansion seems beyond his hopes—the meanest situation in it far, far above his deserts. He knows not all the time that his gracious though neglected parent was intent on prepar-

ing for him, not punishment, but a reception alike beyond his hopes, his deserts, or his conception—that he had wrought out a salvation for him, a means of deliverance from his degrading bondage, and of restoration to his paternal home and happiness—a salvation commensurate to the wants of the most wretched, and the guilt of the most worthless—that his parent's heart was still yearning with love towards him, while his was dissipated in levity, or hardened in insensibility—that, while he shut his stubborn ears against the parental voice, its cry was "Turn ye, turn ye, for wherefore will ye die?" And, while he expected nothing but merited rejection, there was about to be "joy in the presence of the angels of God over a sinner that repented."

With truth it may be said, that, as much as our offences against our heavenly Father exceed those of which any child can be guilty against an earthly

parent, so much does the love of God, "which passeth knowledge," exceed all that ever beat in the bosom of an earthly parent towards his most beloved child.

In the "glorious Gospel of God our Saviour," there is not merely a reception provided for the returning sinner, but a reception full of glory and felicity. Through the atoning blood of Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life," the worthless are welcomed, the "heavy-laden refreshed," and the wretched made happy.

The "remission of sins," restoration to the favour of God, the sanctifying graces of the Divine Spirit operating in the illumination of our benighted minds, the rectifying our perverted wills, and the purifying and exalting our corrupt affections—peace here, and everlasting blessedness hereafter,—these are among the pledges of that stupendous love—"the gifts of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord"—which none but disembodied

spirits can conceive, and nothing but the infinite range of eternity can develope.

These, beloved, are the blessings that await us in our "Father's house." Oh! "better to be a door-keeper there than dwell in the tents of ungodliness!" Wanderers from yourselves, your happiness, and your God, "come to yourselves"—quit the "far country" into which you have strayed, and in which you are perishing—"arise, and go to your Father;" acknowledge "you have sinned against Heaven, and in his sight, and are no more worthy to be called his children"—go with the humility of the prodigal, and doubt not your reception—the house of your Father is open to receive you—his arms are ready to embrace you—his heart to melt in mercy over you. Already he sees you "afar off;" and, while your foot trembles on the threshold, the joyful order is given:—the feast is prepared—the robe and the ring made ready—and the in-

mates of the celestial mansion summoned to be glad—because "ye were dead, and are alive again; ye were lost, and are found."

To dilate on this exquisite parable would be to weaken that feeling of its excellency which the simplest perusal must produce. Nor will I now detain you to notice its inferior beauties. The representation of the natural consequences of sin (as all have or must find them to be) seducing us from peace by a promise of enjoyment, and then plunging us in the deepest misery, and degrading us to the lowest abasement; and the happy illustration of the jealousy and selfish resentment of the Jewish church at the admission of the Gentiles to the privileges of the Gospel, so powerfully depicted in the character of the elder brother incensed at the unmerited restoration and gratuitous happiness of the younger:—these, if I may so express myself, are but the flowers of

this beautiful allegory. May the precious fruits be ours! May none of us have to exclaim at our dying hour, in language nearly similar to that of one of former days*, "I have wandered like the prodigal; but I have not, like the prodigal, returned!"

Now to God, &c.

* The dying cry of (I think) Bishop Bonner was, "Erravi cum Petro, sed non cum Petro flevi."

REASONS FOR PREFERRING THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

2 KINGS, ix. 32.

Who is on my side, who?—and there looked out to him two or three.

THE strongest characteristic of man is his mutability—it is marked in every action of life, whether public or domestic—it affects him in every pursuit, whether of business or of pleasure; all that he does has the love of change inscribed on it; it is the only epitaph that all his buried pursuits, and all their buried pursuers may bear, from him who exchanged Paradise for a desert world, to the babe of yesterday who weeps for a toy, and the moment he has obtained, resigns it for another.

In pleasure, the taste for variety is but too natural, for the very effect of pleasure is to satiate, and nothing but no-

velty can stimulate the palled appetite, whose artificial orgasm, wearied with indulgence, demands excitement; but our rage for variety extends to other objects —to every object—to all that occupies —to all that interests. The beggar feels it when he wanders from hovel to hovel, as much as the conqueror when he traverses from region to region; yet both find only weariness in the change, for both find only a repetition of circumstances without a renewal of excitement from them. Singular contrast between internal restlessness and external uniformity! The fire burns within us, but life refuses fresh fuel. This passion, so universally acknowledged and felt, would be comparatively harmless, if we indulged it only in our pleasures; but it becomes perilous and mischievous in the extreme, when we permit it to extend its range, and operate on the institutions of society and the forms of government. It is still worse when we suffer it to rage among

the principles of religion, and try its insane strength against "the powers of the world to come."

Let me not be mistaken; I am not such a bigot as to say that nothing requires a change, or that every change must be for the worse; but this I say, that while a change for the better must surely be desirable (provided we are sure of our means and our end)—change for the love of change alone will almost certainly be bad. I speak particularly of fluctuation in religion, and I allude, without concealment or hesitation, to the obvious and increasing tendency in the inhabitants of these countries to attach themselves to new systems, new creeds, new teachers in religion. Before I proceed, allow me, like one of old, who said to an incensed antagonist in debate, "strike, but hear"—to announce that I have no intention of disputing the point at present with those who plead the dictates of conscience as the cause of chang-

ing or modifying their religious systems. I speak purely against the capricious love of change for its own sake in these matters. When the prophet of the Lord himself, even Elijah, summoned the people to the most awful controversy ever tried between God and man, even to decide whether they would adopt or renounce the worship of the true God, and along with that their national privileges, their national existence, their national salvation, he used no "railing accusation;" he neither dogmatized, nor reviled; he only offered the people the thrilling choice, "if the Lord be God, serve him; but if Baal, then serve him." Such, or greater moderation, befits the ministers of Christ, who should "in meekness instruct them that oppose themselves." There are multitudes among us who loudly assert the right of conscience in judging for themselves in these matters. It is well; the right cannot be denied but by a despotic government, or

an inquisitorial religion, and, thank God, ours is neither. But have these persons considered seriously whether they are advocating the rights of passion—or prejudice—or ignorance—or conscience—or of a large proportion of the pretensions of the three former, with a very slight, if any, mixture of the claims of the last? To judge this, let them reflect on the causes which in general lead men to renounce the communion of the church of England, and be "blown about with every blast of doctrine" that issues from the lungs of the preachers of the conventicle. Will they dare to weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary? If they do, I hesitate not to say, they will, many of them, be found wanting. The rage for novelty alone has filled a hundred conventicles—the rage for hearing a popular preacher, for mere change of a place of worship, for merely going at a different hour—ay, for going to show that *we would go*, that we would

exercise our liberty in choice of a place of worship—these are the causes that draw multitudes. I do not deny there are other and better.

But to the advocates of the unlimited exercise of conscience, as they call it, in these matters, I have a few words to say. A man's religion must be left between God and him—doubtless; no man may answer for his brother—true; but as long as we are members of civilized society, we have to consider how the religion we adopt may operate on the interests of that society, and whether its operation be good or bad; and here there are two short tests to be proposed. I will propose them very briefly; if any religion is *exclusive, that religion must be unscriptural*—if any religion makes the salvation of mankind to depend on the tenets of an obscure preacher, who perhaps never impressed them (true or false) on the minds of fifty people in his life, that religion cannot be the religion

of that God who wills "all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." I quote the words of God himself—let man gainsay them if he dare. The very church, in opposition to which we boast the title of Reformed, holds this doctrine among her most anti-christian assumptions. And let her hold it, and see if it will be the stay of the souls she has deluded in their last hour. But shall every inflated talker who can collect a congregation presume to tell them that the mercy of the God of infinite worlds is shrunk to a span so small as to embrace their narrow circle, and no more? Horrible to think, that the beneficence of the Deity is to be measured by the limits of a conventicle! Yet *this is said, and thought; and believed.* Fearful delusion! Such have already the spirit of the church of Rome, they only want her power—God grant they may never have it! Exclusive religion is the parent of inquisitions, and persecutions, and of

a hatred passing the hatred of man. From the moment we are brought to consider our fellow-creature as the object of divine vengeance, we think our vengeance can never be half enough for him. Human hate, even at the worst, is satisfied with the death of its victim—hatred dies on the grave of him whom it has murdered. Religious hatred lingers on in the hope of seeing its victim *damned*—it bends its Moloch nostril over the tomb, in hope of smelling the "smoke of the torment go up for ever and ever." Exclusive religion is false—let those who haunt conventicles in the hope of hearing it remember that. The second test that I would propose is this: The religion that is opposite to intellectual cultivation must be false—it must be a system that would reduce man, in this life at least, to the state of the beasts that perish. Here, again, I must mark the strong coincidence between the system of that church which names herself ex-

clusively by the name of Christ, and that against whose power I am pleading. The one holds forth ignorance as the basis of her great fabric; and, wherever that basis has been established, the people are profoundly ignorant. Look to her head-quarters—I speak of the people of Catholic countries—the miserable, beggarly, illiterate, irreligious population of Spain, and Portugal, and Italy. The effects of a religion that have reduced the countries where its fatal experiment has been too successfully tried, must be deprecated; but so must also the results of a religion that would reduce us to that state, without giving us in exchange that external splendor, that meretricious decoration, that "merchandize in gold, and silver, and precious stones," with which, as well as with the other ingredients of the "cup of her abominations," *she* intoxicates the souls of men. In a word, the system against which I lift my testimony is, I believe, and am sure,

equally hostile to the cultivation of all intellectual power—it considers all truth as comprised in the Bible; and so it is: but is no other book to be read? Is learning to be at an end? Are the arts to perish? The question is not in vain —it has been asked, and answered peremptorily—answered by experience —answered by history. That system has had its day—and what a day was it?— a "day of darkness and gloominess—a day of clouds and of thick darkness"—. "a day of trouble, and rebuke, and of blasphemy"—a day, when England saw her king murdered, her nobles banished, her church trampled on—I speak of the times of *the usurper*, when the system to which I allude had its day. God grant those days may never come again, though to some eyes they seem approaching. I appeal to the sense or memory of those who have read of those times—was there education then? what science was cultivated? what wits im-

proved? what minds expanded? All was gloom, hypocrisy, contention, and blasphemy—Let England beware that the experiment be not renewed. Am I now charging the supporters of that system with being the intentional enemies either of government or literature? God forbid! But I would say that power is a dangerous thing in the most innocent hands—it is the serpent twined round the hand of the saint. They know not what they are doing—they know not what they may do. They have power—it is well if it is used aright. Let those who *put that power into their hands look to it.* I turn readily from a view where all is gloom and confusion, to hail with pride and respect that venerable fabric which has sheltered us and our ancestors for three centuries, and under whose roof may it please God that many generations may yet be brought up—the fabric of the church of England. I am not saying or implying that faithful

followers of Christ may not be found in every other department of Christian professors—the church of Christ doubtless has members of every denomination under heaven, and doubtless many rejoicing in his presence together hereafter will wonder at the trifles that divided them on earth. But if we are to draw the line between order and confusion, if we are to have the benefit of a settled mode of church government, and an established form of worship, I know not where we shall find any equal to those which we enjoy as members of the church of England. Bear with me, my brethren, while, I trust, without professional pedantry, but with true filial love and veneration, I speak of that admirable constitution.

The great obvious advantage that the church of England possesses is, that she has in her homilies, her liturgy, and her articles, a standard that can neither be removed nor shaken, an unalterable test

of the soundness of her doctrines. This is an advantage inestimable! If her children wander, to this they can be recalled—if they murmur against her, by this let her be tried, and she shall be justified. Is this an advantage to be claimed by the rambling followers of an unorganized meeting, where the creed of the day depends on the preacher, where contradiction, error, and absurdity, may succeed each other without detection or rebuke, because—*they have no standard for their opinions?* The Scriptures they have, doubtless—but of the Scripture, every stubborn fanatic will deem himself as good a judge, and as sound an interpreter, as his brother or his pastor; ay, and his confidence and obstinacy will be in the direct proportion of his ignorance. Such is the invaluable distinction of having a standard for doctrines and opinions; by this we may "try the spirits, whether they be of God." If there ever should be a day when a de-

generate ministry should "handle the word of God deceitfully," "and attempt to lower the standard of the Gospel," they would be rebuked as loudly by the *articles of the church* as by the writings of the apostles. When I look into them, I find "the whole counsel of God declared fully"—justification by faith, sanctification by the spirit, salvation by grace, all the essential truths of the Gospel as explicitly declared, and as precisely defined, as in the Bible. And is this the church that men desert, on the pretence that she is unscriptural? For shame! Shall she be traduced for the very doctrines which her eloquence has pleaded for, her talents vindicated, her holy men "contended earnestly," and her martyrs blazed for?—She shall not, while there is a tongue left me to rebuke the gainsayer withal. Let such study her doctrines, and compare them with those of the Bible; and "God give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth!"

I pass on from her foundation to her superstructure—her liturgy, that "form of sound words," perhaps the most glorious and suitable in which man ever addressed the Deity. I am not ignorant of books; but I know no human composition like the liturgy of the church of England. I will produce one simple test of its excellence, the vast difference between it and the occasional prayers introduced in it. They are, doubtless, many of them, the compositions of men of talents and piety; but I confess, when I pass from one to the other, I feel as if I were speaking in a different language—they have neither the same simplicity, nor the same energy, nor the same pathos, nor the same unction —their writers seem to have had man in their eye—the composers of the liturgy to look to God alone. Yet against this beautiful and perfect service the strongest force of the objectors has been directed. They complain that it must want the force, fervency, and apparent sincerity

of extempore prayer; I admit that it must, and perhaps so much the better—I admit, that, when a person is accustomed to read, and others accustomed to hear a repetition of the same form of words, they must want the attraction of novelty—the reader will sometimes be negligent, and the hearers will often be cold—but, put all that, and as much more as the ingenuity of objection can devise, into one scale, and for a moment weigh it against the shameful and ludicrous distress of a man, who, in addressing the Deity, has begun a sentence he knows not how to finish, and who, while the congregation are hanging on his lips, is obliged to save himself by grasping at an expression inappropriate, incoherent, perhaps ludicrous, perhaps presumptuous. And has this never been?—ay, and not once, but one thousand times;—and, admitting it never had, its bare possibility is an argument irrefragably strong in favour of a *form of prayer* as the most

proper for our own infirmities, and most suitable to that solemnity with which worms of the dust should approach their Maker. I have heard, often heard the evangelical teachers: most of them possessed eloquence, many of them sincere piety; but, in their devotions, I did painfully feel a certain technical expertness, an acquired habitude, a measured march of words, a mechanical construction of sentences, that convinced me, boast as they might of their freedom, theirs was as much *a form of prayer* as that they affected to deprecate—wanting only its beauty, its sublimity, and its spirituality.

I have one word, one brief word more to say in favour of the utility of a *form of prayer*. That utility is not confined to the public places of worship alone—it accompanies us home—it enables us to unite our children, our dependants, and our domestics, in family prayer. Those who depend on the fluency of a popular minister for their devotions must want

this resource, and its want must be equally awful and deplorable. The son of the church of England may open his prayer-book in the presence of his little family-audience, and invite them to address God in language not unworthy of the Deity, and exquisitely adapted to the exigencies of his creatures. But the admirer of extemporaneous effusions, unless he has the talent and the habit, (and they require both talent and habit,) must remain mute among his kneeling family, without even the value of "sounding brass, or the tinkling cymbal."

I have trespassed long, too long, on your patience, my brethren;—a word, and I have done. It has been said, by those whose absence has thinned our churches, that the reason of their defection was, the ministers of the church of England do not preach the Gospel. This is an awful charge indeed, involving the salvation both of the accuser and accused. Religious differences have ge-

nerally risen from causes miserably unworthy of them; and men have written libraries, and drawn swords, and shed and spent blood, for the difference of surplices, and tippets, and hoods, and rings. But *this is no trifle.* I admit, as all conversant with the history of divinity must admit, that there *was* a time when the clergy of the church of England preached a dull and lifeless morality, when they appeared prouder of being the disciples of Socrates than the "ministers of Christ." That time has passed away. We have been driven to dig to our foundations—so much the better. The charge has been transferred from times that deserved it to times that do not. The charge is false. I have heard the ministers of the church of England make the pulpits resound with gospel truth—I have heard them point the eyes and souls of their congregation to where the banner of the cross floats from the top of Mount Calvary, gird them with

" the whole armour of God," and exhort them to " fight the good fight," as " soldiers of Jesus Christ," the sole " captain of their salvation." But (what may please the objector) I have heard this without any repetition of vain words—without any fanatic whine—without any technical phraseology, more precious in the hearers ears than its meaning—and lastly, I have *never* heard it without good works being rightly and scripturally preached as the fruit and evidence of faith—and may I never hear them disjoined! I have done. I have given my feeble testimony. I have offered my mite. May the church, of which we are the members, when she demands, " who is on my side? who?" see " looking out to her, not three or four," but thousands, and ten thousands of champions, far more powerful than her present feeble advocate, even to the end of many generations.

Now to God, &c.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF CHRISTIANITY.

JOHN, iv. 24.

God is a spirit.

THE religion of Christ is a heavenly and spiritual system, worthy of him who was not of the earth, earthly; but the Lord from heaven, suitable to that character which he gave of it—"My kingdom is not of this world," and every way congenial to the office of Him who came to "shew us plainly of the Father," and revealed, for the first time, to mankind the essential attributes of that divine essence whom they had "ignorantly worshipped," when he informed them, in language emphatically simple, that God was a spirit; was light, and was love—and that this character of spirituality not only belongs indispensably to the religion of Christ, but decidedly marks its distinction from every other, must be ob-

vious to those who look into the history of other systems, and discover them to consist of a few principles or doctrines either manifestly common-place, or purposely mysterious and obscure, while the external parts of every such system are so encumbered with rites and ceremonies, and so overloaded with decoration and embellishment, as to make it plain that the whole art of the contriver was exhausted in ornamenting the avenues of the temple, to prevent the worshippers from discovering the disposition of the structure, or the foulness of the idol which was the object of their adoration—Nay, the same discovery may easily be made by those, who, not possessing a competent knowledge of heathen religion, will turn their eyes on those corruptions of Christianity which crafty or wicked men have introduced for worldly purposes of profit or of power, and they will find, that, precisely as any church degenerates from the truth of Christ, in

the same proportion does she try to conceal her deviations under the mask of multiplied ceremonies and external magnificence, that, like the varnish on the harlot's cheek, betray internal corruption festering under the imposition of outward attraction.

These remarks, though true at all times, and therefore important, are more peculiarly so at this period*, when periodical devotion crowds our places of worship with numbers who never or rarely enter them at any other period, and who therefore require most solemnly to be reminded, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, that a religion, whose impulses are thus mechanical—a religion that imagines the Deity, like an earthly sovereign, may be honoured by stated observances and punctual ceremonies—a religion, that, if the body pays its debts duly, acquits the soul

* Preached before Easter Sunday.

of any share in the obligation—such a religion profiteth nothing. Let such remember Paul's address to the Galatians —"Ye observe times and seasons—I am afraid of you."

Here it may be urged, how uncharitable to reproach men with the performance of their duty, to which they should rather be excited by all the energy of eloquence, and all the blandishments of persuasion! If a strict and punctual performance of the external rites of religion be considered as an object of censure, are we to abandon the churches in order to prove our claims to Christianity, and conceive ourselves faithful disciples of Christ, because we refuse to hear his word and obey his ordinances? No, my brethren, far from it. Nay, I will go so far on your side as to say, that the man who declines attending on the means of grace does, humanly speaking, put himself beyond the reach of conviction or the hope of conversion, and spurns, with

daring and desperate ingratitude, those means by which the long-suffering of God would lead him to repentance. But to this I must add, that no less dangerous is the state of those who participate in those means, without a reflection on their object, or a view to their consequences—who retire periodically from the world, not from conviction, but from habit, and rush back again with an avidity not subdued, but actually renovated, by the restraint, to indemnify themselves for their short absence by imbibing a double portion of its spirit, and exercising a tenfold devotion to its pursuits and enjoyments. That such is the case of multitudes are we not justified in fearing? and are we not justified in warning such in the language of our text, "That God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth?" That we may understand the admonition better, let us examine the words separately: they are

few, but they contain volumes. God is a spirit:—if he be a spirit, it is the heart, not the exterior, of his creatures he regards, or their exterior only so far as they are influenced by an inward motive, which he can alike descry amid the pomp of public worship, the solitude of secret devotion. He is a spirit; and, while man looks on the outward things, he looketh on the heart, and can discover the contradiction between the inward sentiments of our souls and the outward expressions of our lips.

Here it may be asked, can any man be suspected of such gross absurdity, or such daring presumption, as to cherish a sentiment opposite to expressions which he employs in addressing a Being, whose eye is fixed on the heart, while his ear is also open to the words? It seems, indeed, scarce possible, till we search our hearts, and find it true. How often have we, all of us, used language that held not the remotest alliance with the thoughts

that occupied our minds! How often have we concealed, at the bottom of our souls, a wish, a thought, that we dare not avow in words, while we believed, with desperate folly, that, because we forbore its expression, it could therefore escape the notice of Him who made the heart, and sees its workings! Nay, how often have we poured forth prayers for the conquest of passions, or the sacrifice of forbidden indulgence, while a determination lurked in our very souls to pursue them with undiminished eagerness, or at least not relinquish them while a possibility of their gratification remained! Would this be the case, were we really impressed with the conviction that God is a spirit? If it would not, let us not listen with apathy, as if we were told what had long been the object of our knowledge, or told something which it was of no importance to know. Many and momentous are the consequences derived from this simple truth, but none

more momentous than that drawn in our text, "He must be worshipped in spirit and in truth." To worship him in spirit, is to have a deep and lasting sense of the spirituality of the great object of our worship, of his perpetual presence, and resistless power—a consciousness that though, in compassion to our infirmities, prayer is termed a drawing nigh to God, he is always equally nigh to us: nor are we less actually in his presence amid the tumults of life than in the secresy of the closet, when we commune with our own hearts, and in our chamber, and are still. From this, if truly felt, will arise not only a feeling solemnity and a heart-rooted sincerity in our prayers; but an examination into our hearts, to discover whether the objects of our devotion are such as we can conscientiously offer, or rationally expect the fulfilment of—all vain desires—all illusions of the imagination—all suggestions of the passions—all, in fact, that has the world for its object, and

self for its end, will be excluded, not only from our supplications, but from our minds; and the wish of our souls, as well as the theme of our prayers, will be to leave life and its events to him who knows our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, and only ask in this world knowledge of God's truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. But this, though an important consequence, will not be the only one—prayer, though an essential, nay, an indisputable part of Christian life, is not the only one—and a worshipper in spirit and in truth will diffuse, through every part of life, the spirit that breathes in his devotion, and weigh every part of his conduct in the balance of the sanctuary. Here, indeed, is the marked difference between the religion of the world and the religion of the Bible: the professor frequents the public service of the church (if he frequents it all) at the instigation of fashion, or the impulse of habit, or perhaps the

mere lassitude of vacancy on a day that does not admit of the usual resources of employment; or, if he reasons at all about his motives, it is perhaps because he dreads the loss of good estimation among the soberer part of mankind, or conceives that an adherence to the forms of godliness will atone for the absence of the power thereof. The Christian goes because it is an ordinance of Christ, enjoined by Divine Power, and sanctioned by apostolic example; and because (in believing dependence on the divine word), he expects there to enjoy the means of grace, and to revive the hope of glory. The same worldly, worthless, and inadequate motives, prompt the private devotion of the worldling, if, indeed, habit, or some faint and fearful recollection of what the nurse and what the priest have taught, still lead him to the vapid and mechanical performance. But with the Christian the season of prayer is a season of delight, not of re-

straint; of refreshment, not of weariness: he delights to be with God, to exclude the world from the hallowed hour of solemn seclusion; and, like Moses, sit in high conference on the mount of prayer, and catch a prospect of that lovely land, where his steps are tending, and his heart has been long before. And here all parallel ceases; for though the professor may go through the forms of public and private duty with as much ostensible regularity as a zealous Christian, yet there even all *external* resemblance ceases—with the closing doors, and the departing crowd, the devotion of the worldling departs—his religion bears him to the threshold, but bears him no further—on that spot he resigns his temporary and resumes his radical habits—the worshipper of an hour, but the worldling for life. But those who have been taught, by divine power and divine mercy, to worship God in spirit and in truth, feel that their religion, like the

seamless garment of Christ, must be united and consistent in all its parts—that the spiritual improvements they pray for, the spiritual feelings they cherish, the hopes and the fears, the solicitude and the struggle, must be carried from the house of prayer into life—that the spirit that led them to the mount must also inspire them when they mingle with the congregation on the plain—that religion is of no avail, if it lead us ever so punctually to the church, the chapel, or the conventicle, unless it lead us ultimately to God—and that he prays in vain, whose prayers do not diffuse, over every hour of existence, the same spirit of devotion to God, and love to his fellow-creatures, with which they were offered up in the hour of solemn supplication.

Now to God, &c.

ON THE OFFENCE OF THE CROSS.

GALATIANS, v. 11.

The offence of the cross.

THIS plain avowal, on the part of the first preachers of Christianity, that there was something offensive in the religion they taught, must, I think, be admitted as one of the most conclusive proofs of the truth of that religion.

Men who wished to deceive (and to profit by the deception) would certainly have suppressed this circumstance. The apostles candidly avow it; and they do so without any fanatic affectation, without any perverse solicitude for persecution—they do not make this offence to arise from its outraging established opinions, or disturbing the order of society—No—but while they declare that the most inestimable blessings will attend the reception of the religion which they

preach, they in the same breath declare that it ever must and ever will be offensive to the pride, the lusts, and the vices of the world.

Now, my brethren, what an awful lesson does this declaration suggest to us both—to you not to expect, and to us not to preach an easy, popular, world-adapted religion!

Reflect a moment whether you have ever considered the matter thus—whether you were contented to be Christians on the persuasion that Christianity was something that would require no sacrifice, would cause no disturbance of your enjoyment, or interruption of your pursuits—something that might be easily incorporated with your general habits of life, and leave you at liberty to indulge your passions and your follies on the trivial condition of the performance of a few external ceremonies—something that would stand by, and never reproach

you for the predominant worldliness, pride, and hardness of your hearts.

If you thought thus, it is time you were undeceived. It is true we might compose such a religion for you—there is much of it going in the world—but let those who fabricate and those who follow it beware. We have the "record" of what the true religion of Christ is from the lips of its divine author, and under the hands of his inspired disciples. Let us compare the copy, as current in the world, with the original, as existing in the Bible; and let not a resemblance in language deceive us where all other resemblance is wanting. The language of Scripture is often borrowed to contradict its own meaning. If any man's religion be one which does not condemn the pride, presumption, and infidelity of his secret heart—if it be a religion which he can hold compatibly with his vices—if it be a religion that is contented to com-

promise with those vices—if it be a religion that has contended (perhaps successfully) with the corruptions of his outward conduct, and left his worldly spirit unrebuked and unsubdued—that has corrected the "errors of his ways," but left those of his heart untouched—that man's religion is vain:—it is not Christianity—it is not the religion of the Bible.

But does it occur to any one to say—though the religion of Jesus may in former times have been offensive to bigoted Jews and Gentiles, plunged in horrible corruptions, yet surely the world, that has professed Christianity for more than eighteen hundred years, cannot *now* be expected to find it "offensive?" Is this palliation of our text suggested to the minds of any of my hearers? Oh! let them reflect! Is the cause of that opposition which the Gospel meets with to be sought in the *manners* of men? No—in their *hearts*. Those to whom it

was first preached rejected it, not merely because they were Jews or Gentiles, but *because they were men.* Their passions undoubtedly took part with their various systems, and led them to oppose it in various ways; but their opposition arose from the same principle—a principle *which we have in common with them*—an aversion to things humbling to our pride, and mortifying to our corruptions. We are the children of men. There has been no new creation of the human race, except that which is wrought by the power of grace.

The Jew who sought "righteousness by the deeds of the law," and the Gentile who hoped to obtain it by sacrificing to his idols—the Jew who founded his claim to the divine favour on being the "child of Abraham, and never in bondage to any man," and the Gentile who believed it attainable by the exercise of the powers of an unrenewed nature, and an alienated heart—both these descriptions of human

character were necessarily alike enemies to a religion which professed to purify the conscience through the atonement, and the life through the grace of Jesus—which plainly preached "Christ—to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness"—to both "offensive"—nor less offensive since to their "brethren of the flesh," who, like the one, rest the foundation of their hope on their adherence to a national system and external observances; or, like the other, believe that the powers of unassisted nature are available advocates with the Deity, though that very belief includes the essence and the proof of their presumption, inefficacy, and worthlessness.

Let us, then, examine into the true causes of the offence of the Gospel. It is not because it sets itself up against "principalities and powers"—because it aims to subvert or to establish thrones—because it contains any thing hostile to lawfully or even unlawfully constituted

authorities—it has nothing to do with them—it is "not of this world"—its history sufficiently proves this—It is now the established religion of the civilized world—for a long time all the civilized part of mankind was its sworn enemy. From whence arises this change? Purely from mankind discovering that it interfered not "with the powers that be," that it enjoined men to "render unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's," and "put them in mind to be in subjection," "not only for wrath, but for conscience sake." Many centuries, therefore, have now elapsed since the powers of this world have professed themselves on the side of Christianity:—they have forborne to revile its doctrines and persecute its professors—they have agreed to support and protect it—they have given it revenues and privileges, and required it to raise its voice under the sanction of magistrates and monarchs—yet still "the offence of the cross" remains—still real

Christianity, the Christianity of the Bible, is, and always will be, in a certain sense unpopular—not because it calls on rulers to abjure their rights, or the people to neglect their duties, (for then it would always be a favourite with one, and would balance its popularity well between both,) but because it speaks condemnation alike to the vices of both —because its doubly-smiting blow, like that which fell on Egypt in the night of her visitation, is aimed at once and alike at "Pharaoh on his throne, and the captive in his dungeon." It sits on its seat of judgment like John in the wilderness; and, to those who consult it, it speaks with the same awful impartiality—overlooking and overpowering all distinctions of person, profession, and rank, viewing them all in a reference, not to "things temporal, but to things eternal," it answers alike the restless question of the self-righteous Pharisee, the money-grasping publican,

and the turbulent and thoughtless soldier—what shall *we* do?—by the injunction to all to do their duty, not modified according to the petty localities and transitory distinctions of mortal existence, but according to that grand and comprehensive view which beholds all men only as the creatures of God, and heirs of eternity.

Like its divine author, Christianity directs the piercing arrows of its reproof against all who deserve to feel its point. Neither the rags of the mendicant, nor the robes of the monarch, can repel them. It "renders unto all their due." The poor it rebukes for their low-thoughted selfishness, and heartless rapacity—"Ye follow me, not because ye saw the miracles which I did, but because ye did eat of the loaves and fishes." It condemns the callous sensuality and idolatrous confidence in their wealth of the worldly—"Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall

come upon you; your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten." At the moment when the Pharisees are exulting that it has put the Sadducees to silence, it overwhelms *them* in their turn with the emphatic "wo" denounced against their pride, arrogance, and infidelity. Even at the judgment-seat of Pilate, while encountering and confounding the pride of the haughty sceptic governor, it can turn to cast an eye on an humble apostate, and send forth Peter to "weep bitterly." Such is Christianity; and such Christianity must always be unpopular, because it opposes and condemns the vices of all offenders alike.

There are other causes of the unpopularity of the religion of Christ, which appear to me deeply seated alike in the nature of the Gospel and the nature of man. All other religions are in a greater or less degree COMPROMISING; they either substitute external performances

for an internal change, or they compound between the indulgence of some vices and the sacrifice of others. Here let it be observed, I do not speak of *other* religions as contradistinguished to Christianity—I do not allude to Paganism or Mahometanism—No—I allude to those modifications of Christianity existing so generally, and so generally borrowing its name to contradict its spirit and bely its operation. The power of such religions consists in a constant appeal to the passions—a kind of theatrical excitement—a skilful use of occasional topics—a display of exterior for effect's sake—*an impression on the senses, not on the soul;*—and, whether this is produced by the withering gloom of the conventicle, or the imposing and meretricious splendor of Catholicism, provided they are effective to the purpose, it is of little consequence to those who are the contrivers and those who are the victims of the illusion. Some good doubtless attends

their operation—light is light, however dense and distorted the medium through which it struggles,—but it is not substantial, permanent, intrinsic good. The gold bears no proportion to the alloy—it *does* dispose some men to commence a superficial and external reformation—it bribes their passions to do that for them apparently which nothing but the power of the Gospel can do radically and really—it leaves them in the full indulgence of their passions, on the condition of their being baptized by a new name—it leaves them their *pride*—supported in the one by the hope of self-justification, avouched in the daring phrase of the "merit of good works," and in the other by the gloomy joy of considering themselves as the "solely favoured of the Lord," the Goshen on which the beams of his grace shine, while all the land is wrapt in Egyptian darkness; on which it may be (not uncharitably) presumed they look with

rather more complacency than commiseration. Under these cherished views, the various religions which men are for ever substituting for Christianity, and fondly calling by its exclusive name, will doubtless be highly popular; but real Christianity will still be as unpopular as ever. "The offence of the cross" hath not ceased, and will not cease:—it speaks no imperfect, equivocal language—it borrows no local topics for interest or occasional effect—it compromises for no man's vices—it asks no man's passions to aid it in the conquest of his corruptions—if such aid is offered, it meets it with the stern rebuke, "Who hath required this at your hand?" It is alike disdainful of earthly help or hindrance:—its powers are "the powers of the world to come." It is at once the mildest and most absolute of all religions:—it has nothing of the spirit of those missionaries*

* The Jesuits in China.

who indulged their pseudo converts with permission to worship their former idols, provided they called them by the names of the Blessed Virgin and the saints—it is unsparing, uncompromising—*aut Cæsar; aut nullus.* If it be asked of which of our corruptions does Christianity demand the sacrifice?—the answer is—*of all.* If it be required what part of our life and time does the Gospel demand to be devoted to its service?—the answer is—the whole. Its voice is, "My son, give me thine heart." It does not content itself with combating this or that evil passion—with reforming this or that vice—with plucking off a rotten branch, and leaving the trunk unsound—with casting out the devil for a time, and then suffering him to return with seven others more wicked than himself, making the state of their victim worse than the first—it attacks the evil power in its strongest hold—its centre and its citadel—even *the heart of man*—that heart which irre-

fragable authority has pronounced to be "deceitful, and desperately wicked." The almighty physician (like a true physician) applies his medicine to the nobler parts; and, when the poison is expelled from them, then, and only then, will "all the members rejoice with it" in recovered sanity.

Such was the mode in which the apostles of Jesus Christ sought to reform the world. The world lay in corruption and darkness. The abominations of mankind were perhaps never more numerous and horrible than at the period when Christianity was revealed, and the "day-spring from on high" visited their darkness. The sinful cities of the plain, on which the fire of God fell, were but a prototype of that great and wicked city, which the affectation of classical idolatry still terms the mistress of the world. Twelve illiterate fishermen went forth in their weakness to contend with this Goliah-champion of infidelity, this dazzling

and stupendous accumulation of all that was awful in human power, splendid in human genius, seductive in human pleasure, and terrific in human passion. What were their arms?—sincerity and confidence in God. What was their security?—an uncompromising spirit. Their battle-word was "The offence of the cross." They disdained to hide—they boasted of it.

This was their mode of warfare—and it prevailed. They testified to all the Gospel of Jesus Christ—that he was the Son of God, proved to be so by the resurrection from the dead—that he had made an atonement for sin, which had been accepted by the Almighty, even for the sins of the whole world (which *at once* superseded the necessity of those vain efforts to propitiate the Deity which man had been making ever since the fall)—that whoever believed in Him had "the forgiveness of sin," and was "justified by Him from all things from which he

could not be justified by the law of Moses," and still less by the impure and bloody rites of Paganism. And to them who "believed their report"—who received their testimony of Christ and his salvation—to them they testified the necessity of obeying that Gospel which they believed—of walking in faithful imitation of Him, who was not only "a propitiation for sin, but an ensample that we should follow his steps"—of manifesting forth the power of *His* grace, who had "called them into his marvellous light," not by visionary boasting or enthusiastic licentiousness, but by living "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world"—"with well-doing putting to silence the ignorance of foolish men;" and "bringing forth fruit"—substantial fruit of good works—"to the honour and glory of God, through Jesus Christ."

Their preaching, amply diversified and dilated as it is in the epistles by the eloquence of Paul, the zeal of Peter, the

energetic rigour of James; and the holy philanthropy of John, appears to me to utter but two emphatic sentences:—it says to the unbelieving world—believe;—to the believing few—obey:—it rests on those two immutable foundations; and the Jachin and Boaz of the temple never rested on a basis so unassailable and unchangeable.

I have thus stated two causes of the offence of the cross. The universality of its claims:—it interferes not with the powers of this world (nay, it commands obedience to them); but it suffers no power of this world to interfere with it. —Next its uncompromising tone with regard to the sacrifices it demands. Men would be well content to make conditions with the most exacting religion; but Christianity offers no conditions—it will have all or none—it holds forth the robe of Christ's salvation as the ancient ambassador once held forth his skirt in token of *eternal* peace or hostility. But

the strongest cause of the unpopularity of Christianity, and the last I shall state on this occasion, arises from the peculiar character of its promises and its denunciations: the former neither flattering the *temporal* hopes and wishes of man, nor the latter affecting the objects of his temporal fears and sufferings. This must ever be a powerful cause of unpopularity among those, who, inverting the apostolic rule, "walk by sight, not by faith"—a description that probably includes about nine-tenths of mankind. But on this subject let the Gospel speak for itself: and truly it speaks a plain and powerful language to "those who have ears to hear." What are the prospects and promises which Christianity holds out to its professors? For what tempting equivalent does it require us to give up the world? Under what sanctions does it enjoin us to "to take up the cross?"

Does Christ allure his disciples by the hope of "living long," and seeing "good

days in the land?"—of "sitting every man under his vine and under his fig-tree?"—of basking away existence under the sun of prosperity all our days, and ending it beneath the shade of trees that we have planted, and roofs that we have raised, among children and children's children, that "we have had at our desire," "sons that have grown up as young plants, and daughters like the polished corners of the temple?"

I tell you, my brethren, Christianity does *not* do this; but it does a thousand and a thousand-fold more:—it promises us a place of rest, that never shall be disturbed—of felicity, that never shall be interrupted or diminished—"a kingdom that cannot be moved"—"an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and amid saints in light:"—*such are its promises*—And all the "kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," if thrown by Him to whom they belong, with added temptations, into one scale, shall be out-

weighed, if the believer places the "hope full of immortality" in the other. But while I assert and triumph in the *exclusively spiritual* distinctions of the Gospel, let me add that it also has *temporal* advantages (of a certain description) in store for its real disciples. After what I have said, these words may sound sufficiently strange, but they are nevertheless true.

The true professors of the Gospel will certainly enjoy a degree of temporal tranquillity, which is the necessary result of its nature and its precepts. They who "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," will doubtless be less exposed to the effects of the bitter and fiery passions of life than those who are hourly exercising them on others. Hatred and rancour will be weary in time (if not ashamed) of persecuting beings who neither resist nor retort:—if they endeavour "to live peaceably with all men," men will grow tired of molesting

them—if they "in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves," controversy must lose its rage, and calumny its venom—if, finally, "by *well doing* they put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," men must *at last* be silent. It is one of the blessings promised in the Psalms to the humble and peaceful believer, that he "shall be delivered from the strife of tongues;" and this blessing (no inconsiderable one) Christianity doubtless will bestow on all its real professors in this life.

And now, my brethren, after this brief, but, I trust, not unfaithful account of the causes of the "offence of the cross" —that is, of the unpopularity of true Christianity—you may be enabled to form a judgment of your own feelings in relation to it.

Had it been represented to you as promising peace and prosperity, offering to gratify every wish of your hearts, and realize every dream of your imagina-

tions, how would your hearts have expanded to receive this flattering and triumphant religion?

The religion that is preached to you by Christ and his apostles has promised unspeakably more:—its gift is not *time*, but *eternity*—not what is fleeting and fugitive, (scarce felt in enjoyment itself, yet hopelessly regretted when that enjoyment is past,) but that which the power of language sinks under the expression of, as the powers of the mind faint beneath its conception. *Eternity!* I utter the word, but feel in my mind no answering or adequate idea—how, then, *can* I hope to excite one in yours? How even *dare* I, when perhaps the angel nearest to the throne of God is unable to appreciate its value, or to sound the depth of its import?

And are you insensible to, and *can* you be negligent of, these mighty blessings, "these exceeding great and precious promises," these "unsearchable

riches of Christ," this stupendous munificence of divinity? Are you still, while manna is offered to your distempered taste, longing after the "flesh-pots of Egypt," still gloating over husks that swine would not eat? Then, my brethren, with you the "offence of the cross," its great offence (the spirituality of its nature, its consolations and its hopes), hath not ceased. You have yet to learn the real character and power of Christianity. Seek it, I beseech you, as you value your souls; but beware *where* you seek it: it is not always to be found in the volumes of popular divinity, nor in the lives of ordinary professors, nor in the high-strained language and pretensions of modern puritanism—more seductive, because more exciting; but equally false, because equally unscriptural. *Search for it in your Bibles;* and there alone will you find it represented fully and faithfully: "its offence" not palliated, and "its ex-

ceeding great reward" amply and gloriously displayed.

There is a general complaint of there being too little religion in the world. In one sense I am rather inclined to think there is too much—too much of what is false. There is much of nominal religion—much of controversial religion—much of that religion which will one day be discovered to be no religion at all. Is it not time for you to inquire what kind of Christianity is that you profess? Is it the temporising Christianity of philosophy? Is it the lifeless Christianity of the formalist? Is it the infidel Christianity of the worldling? *If it be, it is not the religion of Christ.* I have showed where that is to be sought and found; and to that, as to the only "anchor of the soul," I adjure you to turn, by all that is awful or precious, to yours—by hope, and by fear—by the hope of an asylum, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and

the weary are at rest"—by the fear, not of them "which can kill the body, but of Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell"—by these we plead to you for the interests of a soul which shall survive the flames that consume the world; and, if you reject the Gospel, survive to feed flames that burn for ever and ever.

By these considerations, under whose power language fails us, we plead to you vitally to embrace, and faithfully to obey, the religion of Jesus. Turn ye, who listen to us with cold incredulity, turn, and "hark how we will bribe you:" —not by "handling the word of God deceitfully"—not by concealing "the offence of the cross"—far be it—we do not say it will exempt you from the casualties of life, or the miseries of humanity—we do not promise you, in its name, the abatement of a single physical pain, or temporal evil. But, even in this life, it will give "a peace that the world can-

not give;" and "great shall be your reward in heaven."

Blessed, blessed is the people, O Lord! whom thou choosest; they shall be kept, *not* "from the sound of the trumpet, and the alarm of war," but from being terrified by the summons of the one, or pierced by the sword of the other. Their being *thy children* will not, indeed, preserve them from the tyrant and the furnace; but, like the favoured children of old, the fire shall "have no power over them," and the "Son of God" shall walk with them in the midst of the flames, and there shall be "no hurt" on them.

And you, my brethren, who "know the truth as it is in Jesus," with whom the "offence of the cross" has become your joy and boast, remember that its practice is as simple as its doctrines are sublime—that *it* alone can at once elevate man above the world, and yet teach him how to live in it. Its duties are not those of tremendous emergencies,

of passionate and perilous excitement—they are domestic, practicable, every-day virtues.

Continue in these, my brethren; and, by "peaceable continuance in well-doing," justify yourselves to your God, your conscience, and yourselves; "give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully;" "be careful to maintain good works;" and, in due season, ye shall reap from the "offence of the cross" an abundant harvest of eternal felicity.

Now to God, &c.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES.

ST. JOHN, v. 39.

Search the Scriptures.

THERE can be no stronger proof of the importance and necessity of this precept than that which is supplied by the lives of those who profess to "think that in *them* they have everlasting life," while their hourly practice is at variance with the precepts of Him "of whom they testify." It must be obvious to the most shallow observer, that there is a striking difference between the commandments of Christ as delivered in the Gospel, and the lives of those who profess themselves his disciples. There can be no plainer cause of that difference than the general neglect of the injunction given in our text—"search the Scriptures;"—there can be no better remedy for it than a faithful adherence to it; and

such as obey it will doubtless feel themselves not deceived in the thought, that "in them they have everlasting life."

But let me not here seem to urge an unfounded charge against professing Christians in general. We have a test easily referred to—to that I appeal:—let the Bible be the test, and your own consciences the judge. Remember, you will one day have a judge who can neither be deceived nor overcome!

Is it not *true*, that the views and habits which tend to and centre in this world, whether they be what in *its* language are termed trivial or important, whether they are expended on the accumulation of dross, the attainment of glittering instability, or the desire of factitious enjoyment—is it not *true* that all such views are proscribed by the Scriptures as variously modified, but equally substantial workings of that "flesh which lusteth against the spirit," of that "carnal mind," which to possess or to partake

is "enmity against God?"—Yet is it not equally *true*, that those, and those alone, are the views by which the minds of professing Christians are animated and directed—that to those all the powers of their being are devoted—that their energies are aroused, and their passions excited, just in proportion as those objects become accessible or auspicious—that their praise or their pity are bestowed on their companions in life exactly as they are attained or forfeited—and that those over whom they have any influence, or for whom they feel any solicitude, they endeavour to prove it to, by aiding and inspiriting them in the pursuit of those objects, whose pursuit or attainment the "Scriptures" declare to be hostile to their everlasting interests?—Is it not *true*, that the vices and evils against which the Gospel points its emphatic "woes" are the cherished favourites of that world which professes the Gospel, and that the objects which

it holds forth as alone precious and important are by that world systematically depreciated and disregarded?

"Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord," in infinite condescension to his ancient people. Come, now, and let us together "search the Scriptures," and find "whether these things are so." The inquiry will indeed be awful, but the result may be a blessed one.

Suppose our Bibles open before us, what do they say, and what do our consciences answer? Is not the "love of money," which is called in the Scriptures "the root of all evil," virtually termed by the world the source of all good?

Are not those pleasures in which the apostle fervently exclaims—"they are dead who live"—deemed by the world the only objects worth living for?

"Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content," is the language of the Scriptures. Cease not to add store to

store, and land to land, to improve comforts into refinements, and refinements into luxuries, to provide not for the wants of nature, but for the wants of invention, is the advice and the practice of the world.

"Be not high-minded, but condescend to men of low estate," is the language of the Scriptures. Always aim at connexions and appearances as superior to your real estate in life, as inadequate to the pretensions of your vanity, is the exhortation of the world.

"Be humble, and provoke not enmity," "be meek; and resist not evil," "be loving, and look not every man on his own things," is the language of the Scriptures. Maintain your rights with jealous and haughty vigilance, resent indignities with a promptitude and spirit that will intimidate if not retaliate on your antagonist, and time your friendships and your differences to the circumstances of those you are connected with, is the advice of the world.

"Let your life be hid with Christ in God," is the language of the Scriptures. Let your manners, your habits, and even your principles, be modified by those of the objects and inmates of this world,—in them "live, and move, and have your being," and devote to the things of another world those parts of it which your more important occupations may or may not spare, that scanty portion of distracted consideration, which will neither withdraw your time nor your attention from the things of this world, is the audible language of *its* practice. In a word, "seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness," is the injunction of the Scripture, from its first page to its last; while, Seek the good things of this life, and let the objects of the next occupy any remainder of your time, or supply any deficit of your enjoyment, when you are no longer able to pursue the business or indulge in the pleasures of this, is the cry of all mankind as they tri-

triumphantly follow the standard which the world waves aloft in token of its pursuits and of its spirit, and on which is broadly inscribed its attractive motto—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life."

Whence, my brethren, is this awful contradiction between our profession and our practice? whence is it, that a "world lying in sin," and exercising the most rooted hostility to the commands, should yet "name itself by the name of Jesus?" and whence is it that those, to whom this contradiction is undeniably demonstrated, should evade or slumber over the discovery, and regard it as "a light thing," that they should be proved to be in a state, of which the alternative is a fearful misconstruction of, or a daring opposition to, those Scriptures in which "they think they have everlasting life."

The cause (one cause at least) is, they do not "*search* the Scriptures"—Yes, I lay an emphasis on the word "search!"—

They may read (*how*, I shall endeavour to show hereafter), but they do not "search" them. Oh! if they did, they dare not (as perhaps many in this assembly are at this moment doing) betake themselves to the hopeless, wretched, self-deceiving task of "daubing the wall with untempered mortar," of palliating what their consciences disown, and qualifying what their lives assert. The truth is simple, and one—we must either adhere to or reject it,—but it is as positive as it is simple—it declares that "he that is not with them is against them";—"he that putteth his hand to the plough, and looketh back, is not fit for the kingdom of God." Felix, who probably perished in his sins, was "almost persuaded to be a Christian"—the young man, who lacked but "one thing," went away sorrowful from the very threshold of heaven —"he was not far from the kingdom of God."

I believe that no stronger proof of the

necessity of the injunction given in our text could be urged than that which arises from the various claims of professors, all urging proudly their pretensions to the blessings of the Gospel, and all proving the hollowness of those pretensions by the very tone in which they are pleaded. They have not "searched the Scriptures" for their title to everlasting life, and short of that title I know no other. Would not this assembly mix some resentment with their surprise, if they were told that on this point most of them probably hold the most unscriptural errors of that church, on whose degeneracy from the "faith of Christ" they look with well-justified commiseration?—if they were told that the error of that church concerning the "simplicity which is in Christ Jesus," is slightly modified, but virtually retained, by multitudes of our own communion? The cause is easily tried—Would that I had not been so often the judge!—Ask an ordinary

professor of the Romish faith on what he places his dependence for salvation, and he will answer, on his being a member of the true church—urge him with his many moral defections, with the gross inconsistency between the life he leads and the plainest precepts of Christianity, his answer is still prompt, his confidence still unshaken: he is a son of the true church, and all others are children of perdition. If a similar question be asked of an ordinary member of the Church of England, his answer will probably be conveyed in terms less grossly ignorant and superstitious, but its spirit and its meaning will be nearly the same —he will be able to produce no better proof of his being in a state of acceptance than his being a member of a communion in which his first religious impressions have been received, and to an adherence to which he transfers the whole responsibility of his Christianity. Nay, were this question addressed to many

of the higher classes, either in intellectual or social life,—we should *certainly* find in their answers greater refinement of expression, and perhaps of thought—but we should *probably* find equal grossness and mischievousness of error,—we should find in all a dependence for their spiritual distinction placed on an earthly foundation.

My own observation has never failed in a single instance to prove that an inquiry into the spiritual state of *the generality* of members of the Church of England has been invariably followed by a declaration that they *belonged to that communion*, delivered in a tone that implied their being so was a sufficient proof that they were valid and substantial Christians.

Could this have been the case had they "searched the Scriptures?" Are we *there* told that "the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and shall we rest our claims on

baptismal privileges, outward conformity, and an adherence (perhaps the result of habit, perhaps of accident) to a national system, which, however pure, can never purify *us* without the grace of God and the power of the Scriptures? Are we told in them that it is not they who say, "Lord! Lord!" shall enter into his kingdom, but they who "do the will of his Father who is in heaven?" And shall we flatter ourselves with the gratuitous title of members of that kingdom, while we are actually inverting the conditions on which alone we can enter it? In a word, shall we presume to join what God hath put asunder—inward defection and outward profession?—we might as well attempt to make concord "between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial." The purest system of national religion, the soundest form of words in our liturgy, the most zealous and enlightened hierarchy, never did, and never could, save a single soul.

Examine, with me, my brethren, the lives of the majority of professing Christians—Would that the examination did not probably include that of most who are assembled here! There are multitudes in the world, who, surrounded by ease and prosperity, and living in the soft exchange of the courtesies of life, glide through existence in decent infidelity, and drop into the grave with as much religion in their hearts as the beasts that perish.

There are multitudes who, by their situation, are exempted from the tragical struggles of life, and from the same cause are in no danger of being seduced into its grosser evils, who place to *their own* account what is due to that of their circumstances in life, and imagine, because they are accidentally above temptation, they are internally superior to guilt. Gentle, perhaps, by nature, and polished by education, they perform with grace the ordinary movements of civilized life; from

whose return they expect a homage to their vanity, or a repayment to their interest—and this they think is living in Christian charity. Possessed of worldly prudence, they compromise judiciously between their indulgences and their means, and contrive to enjoy the one without transgressing the bounds of the other—and this they deem living in Christian moderation. Under a momentary impulse, which the most selfish will sometimes feel, they subduct from the pampered claims of their vanity a mite for their indigent brethren—and to this they confine the whole extent and spirit of their Christian beneficence. Seduced by a popular preacher, and luxurious accommodation, they will venture sometimes to the house of prayer; and still more rarely with a manual of devotion in their hands, and a cold formula on their unbelieving lips, they surround the table of the Lord, to partake of the memorials of his death—and this they be-

lieve the utmost extent of the demands of the Christian religion.

They have not searched the Scriptures —they have not studied the "lively oracles of God"—they are ignorant of "that word which is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder" of the pretensions of the flesh and spirit, and forcing on the soul that conviction which, though written in adamantine characters in the Scriptures, is so seldom legible in the hearts of its readers, that, "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Are there, then, none that study the Scriptures?—Yes, multitudes read them —multitudes hear them read—but few "search them:"—to their lives I appeal —yes, to their lives. I need not follow any man to his closet to know whether he studies his Bible or no—the evidences of that study will soon shine forth in his life, and compel even the gainsayers to "take note of him, that he hath been

with Jesus." To those who profess its study in the ordinary mode, I would address the emphatic question of the evangelist, "Understandest thou what thou needest?" Oh! there is a mode of reading it that frustrates all the value of its contents, that cons over its pages with a lifeless eye, that closes them with a cold hand when *the lessons of the day* are concluded, and departs untouched and unblessed from the perusal of things "that angels desire to look into."

My brethren, if you study the Scriptures, do you seek to communicate the blessings you have found there? Do you study them amongst, and recommend them to, your family and your children, your dependents and your domestics? Do you read them as the rule of life and the guide to futurity, as supplying the only efficient means of grace, and the only substantial hope of glory? Is your language and your feeling concerning them like that of him who exclaimed, "Oh!

taste and see that the Lord is gracious!" If your own conscience refuses to answer these questions, will not the experience of those who surround you, who are connected with you by nature or by affection, answer them for you? When you speak of the attainments which may render them eminent in life, or amiable in society, *then*, *then* you are interested—they see your eyes kindle—they hear your voice exalted—they feel your whole soul poured out on the topic; but if the Scriptures, and what they contain, be the subject, if the foundation on which you and they are to be built to stand or fall for ever be alluded to, do they not see your timid hesitation, your chilling reluctance, your impatience of a theme which you are ashamed to dismiss, and dare not investigate?

I have asked, *do* you read the Scriptures to your family?—I change the expression—*Dare* you read them? Are your own temper, habits, and example,

such, that you can venture to display to them the rules that should direct; the promises that should cheer, and the spirit that should pervade the life of a Christian with an unaltered cheek? While you read, does your heart whisper in accordance, *my example approves this, my* children cannot start at the inconsistency between the precepts of their Saviour and the life of their parent?

The world presents not a more glorious spectacle than that of a pastor or a parent expounding the word of God to a circle of filial hearers, and feeling (and he will feel it in humility) that his own example is a living illustration of the text he reads.

It is the want of this, my brethren, that causes our aversion to study the Scriptures—we dread to unfold the record that will condemn, or compel us to relinquish the evils it condemns. He who betakes himself to its study must, like the young man of whom it tells, "sell

all that he has, and follow Christ," or "go away sorrowful."

One word more on the difference between the results of a system of religion founded on a faithful "search of the Scriptures," and those of a system which rests on "other foundation than which is laid" *there*. The general result of worldly religion will probably be to induce us to observe the forms of devotion more strictly, to frequent the places of public worship with decent punctuality, and perhaps to reform outward irregularities; but this partial and imperfect change (which cannot even pacify our own hearts), our consciences will tell us loudly, cannot pacify Him who is "greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." The world is at the bottom of that change, after all, and therefore it cannot give us that "peace which the world cannot give"—miserable, irresolute, and sceptical, its professors must live and must die. But when, through "search

of the Scriptures," we become acquainted "with the whole counsel of God"—when we are conversant with the "glorious gospel of His grace," we find in it that perfection of righteousness and of love which no human system could devise, and the want of which no human system can supply—it displays to us God reconciled to sinners through his Son, in "whom he is well pleased," and, for his sake, with all that believe in his name, enabling them, by his grace, to walk according to that new "law of love" which he has enjoined, and sustaining and animating them by the hope of "seeing Him as he is," amid that glory where love shall be made perfect and joy full. In the Scriptures alone we find "mercy and truth meet together" in the work of man's salvation (all other systems set them some way at variance)—we find how man can be acquitted, and yet "God be just"—how a being full of weakness and infirmity can walk accept-

ably in the divine sight—a worm of the dust become a hopeful candidate for eternal glory.

The truths displayed in that inestimable volume are alone sufficient to satisfy the reason, to calm the conscience, to enlighten the mind, and to ameliorate the heart—to make the vale of misery fruitful in wells whose waters spring up unto everlasting life.

Beloved, were they the last words I had to utter, they should be the words of my text—"Search the Scriptures."

If we are reproached for adhering to the truths we find there, be assured our search will enable us to answer the objections of the worldly, and (better than that) to *feel* their fallacy.

If we are told that the doctrines of the Gospel lead to spiritual pride, the Scriptures furnish the answer—"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." That which tends to exalt God *alone*, as the Saviour of sinners, must surely tend to

humble man. If we are told that it is presumptuous for man to consider himself in a state of acceptance with God, let us "in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves," show them on what our foundation for that acceptance rests—"not on works of righteousness which we have done," but "on his grace and mercy who hath saved us." If, above all, we are reviled as holding doctrines that lead to licentiousness, let us answer the revilers *by our lives.*

I know no refutation of cavils against the Gospel so irresistible as the practice of its professors: nor is there on earth so eloquent a sermon on Christianity, as the silent lesson of a consistent and spotless example.

Now to God, &c.

THE END.

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